



AMERICAN COMICS GROUP...TOPS *for* THRILLS!



No 20
NOV.-DEC.

BLAZING WEST

10¢

starring

BANTAM BUCKAROO
HOODED
HORSEMAN

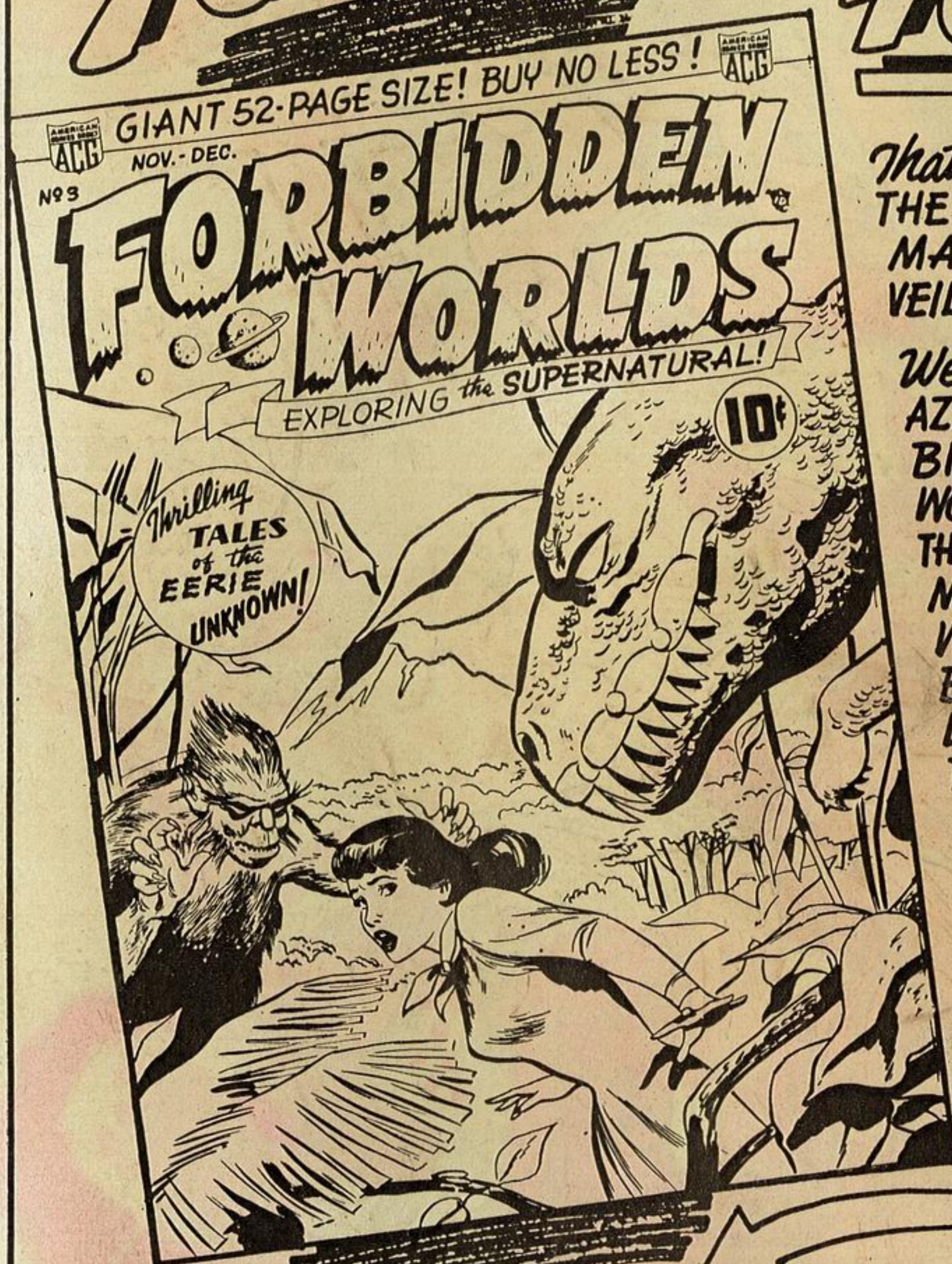


Opden W. Bentley



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VEIL OF FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE!

We DARE YOU TO READ THIS MAG-
AZINE...TO VENTURE INTO FOR-
BIDDEN WORLDS...UNKNOWN
WORLDS! READ IT...AND WATCH
THE SUPERNATURAL COME ALIVE!
MEET GHOSTS, ZOMBIES, WERE-
WOLVES, VAMPIRES... CHILL TO
BLACK MAGIC FROM BEYOND
LIFE ITSELF...GASP AT STRANGER
THINGS THAN EVER THE MIND
OF MAN CONCEIVED!

It's ALL HERE FOR YOU IN
THE ONE MAGAZINE THAT
DARES TO BE DIFFERENT
...THAT DARES TO TELL
ALL! FOR THE THRILL-TIME
OF A LIFETIME, READ

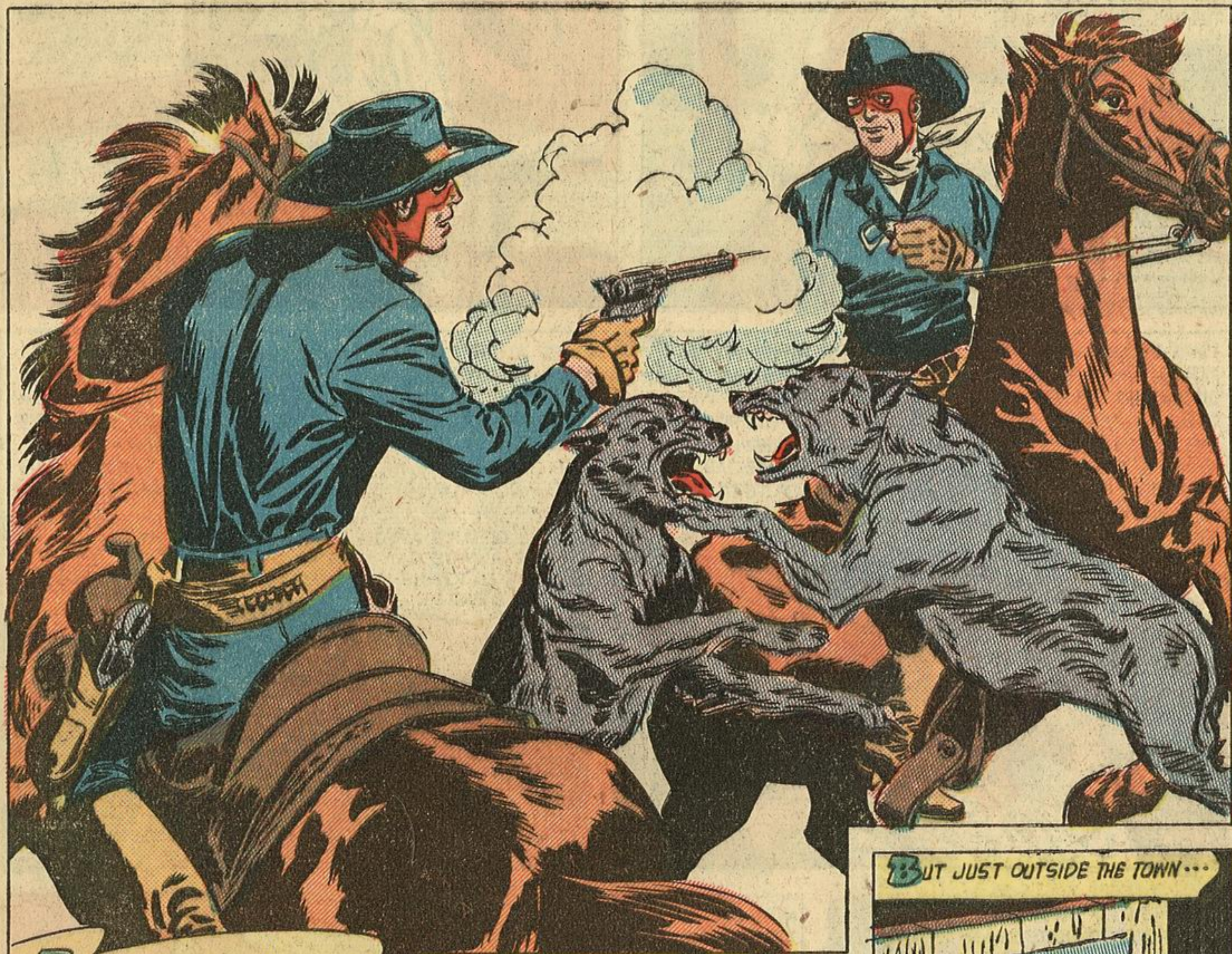
FORBIDDEN WORLDS

EXPLORING the SUPERNATURAL!

10¢
on all
STANDS

The great new companion to "ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN!"

The HOODED HORSEMAN



BURSTING LIKE A JUGGERNAUT THROUGH THE BLOOD-STAINED PAGES OF FRONTIER HISTORY COME THE GALLOPING FIGURES OF A CRIMSON-MASKED RIDER AND A FIERCE-EYED DOG...KNOWN AS THE **HOODED HORSEMAN** AND **FLASH**! THEY'RE THE DEADLIEST DUO IN THE BLAZING WEST...UNTIL THEY MEET UP WITH **ANOTHER** PAIR WHO GO BY THE SAME MONICKERS!

WE'VE NEVER BEEN IN THESE PARTS BEFORE, FLASH...MEBBE I'LL FIND SOME EXCITEMENT AS THE **HOODED HORSEMAN** IN THAT TOWN AHEAD OF US THAR! LET'S MOSEY ALONG AN' SEE!



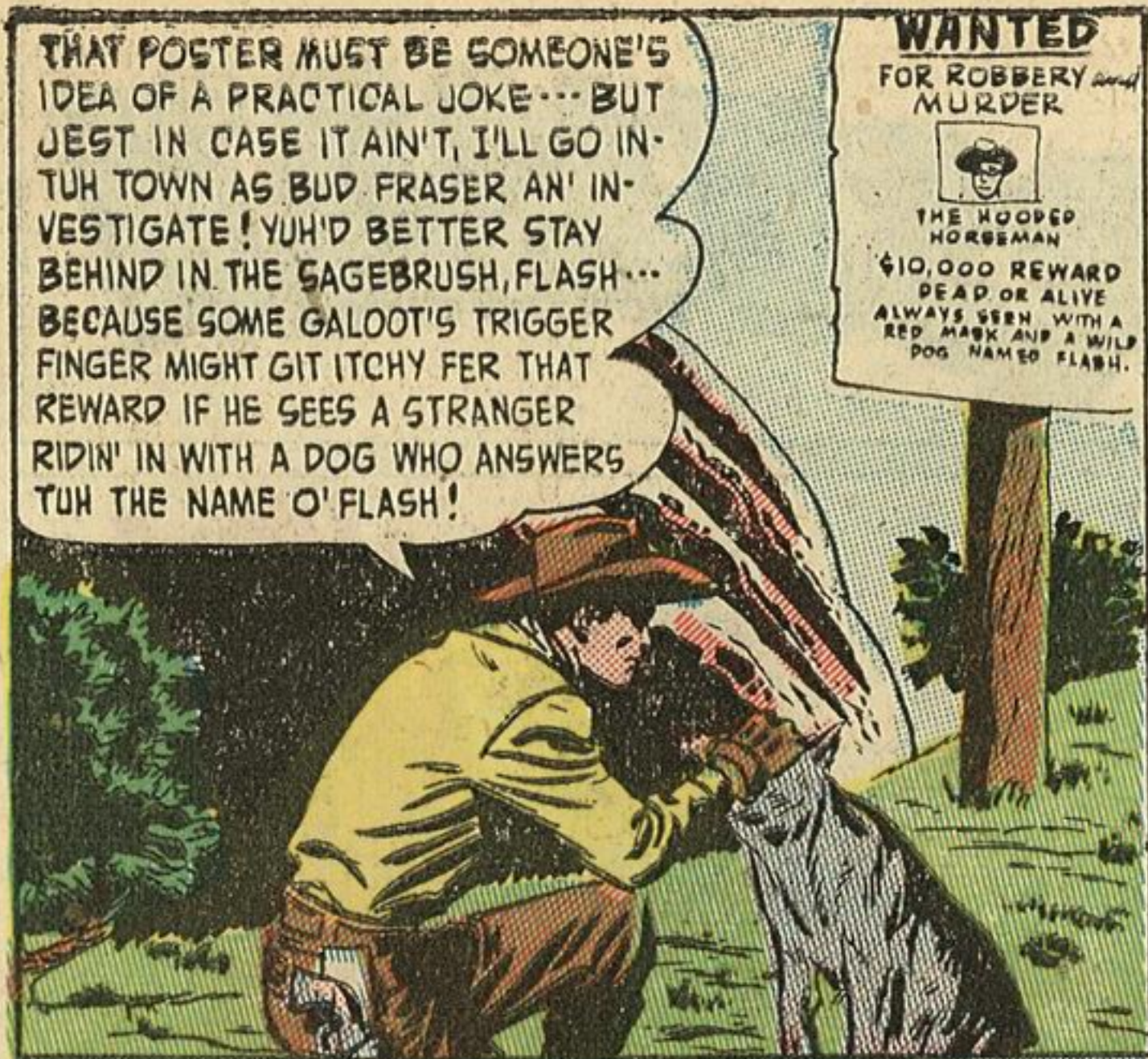
BUT JUST OUTSIDE THE TOWN...

WANTED
FOR ROBBERY and
MURDER



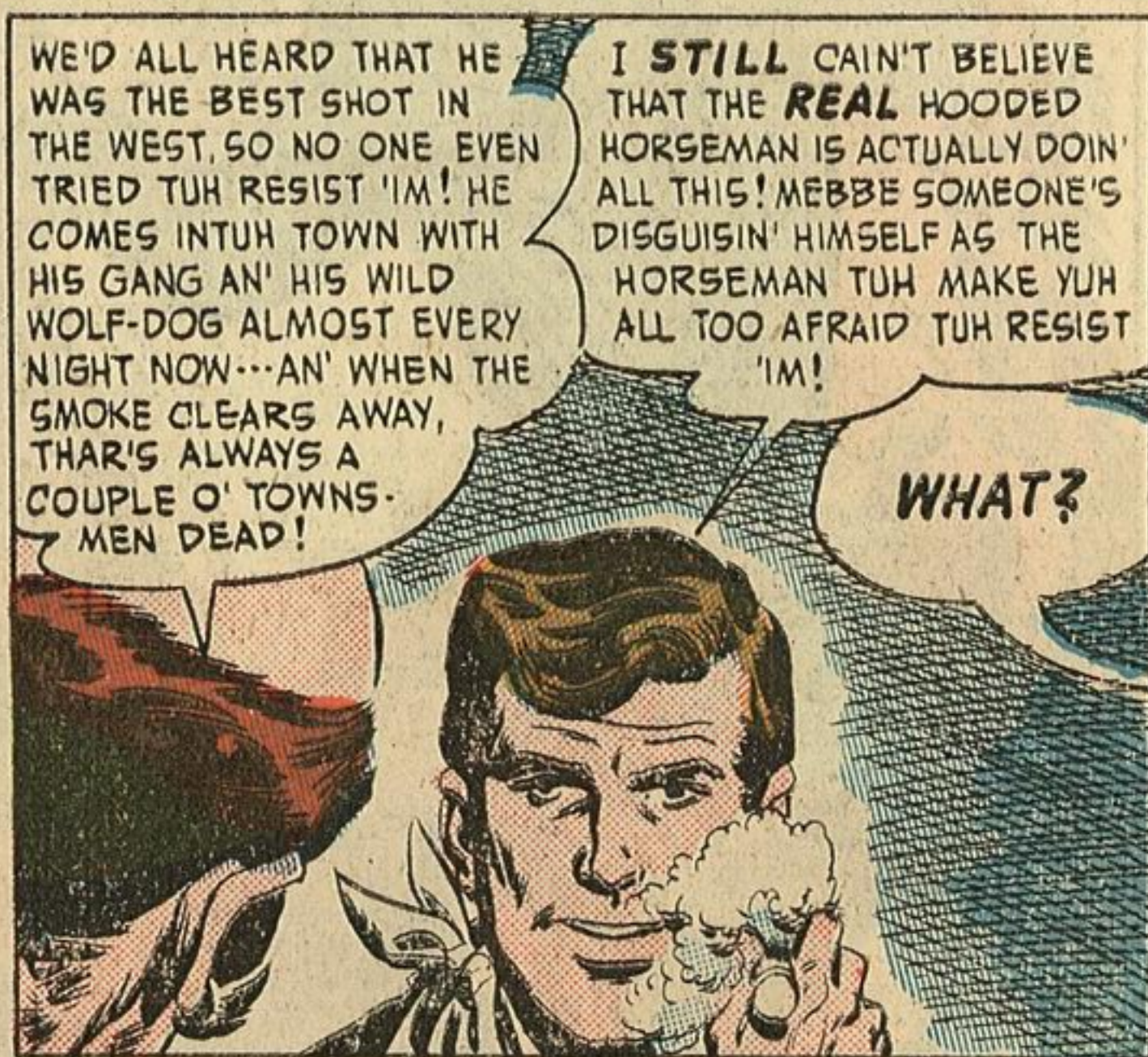
THE HOODED
HORSEMAN
\$10,000 REWARD
DEAD OR ALIVE
ALWAYS SEEN WITH A
RED MASK AND A WILD
DOG NAMED FLASH

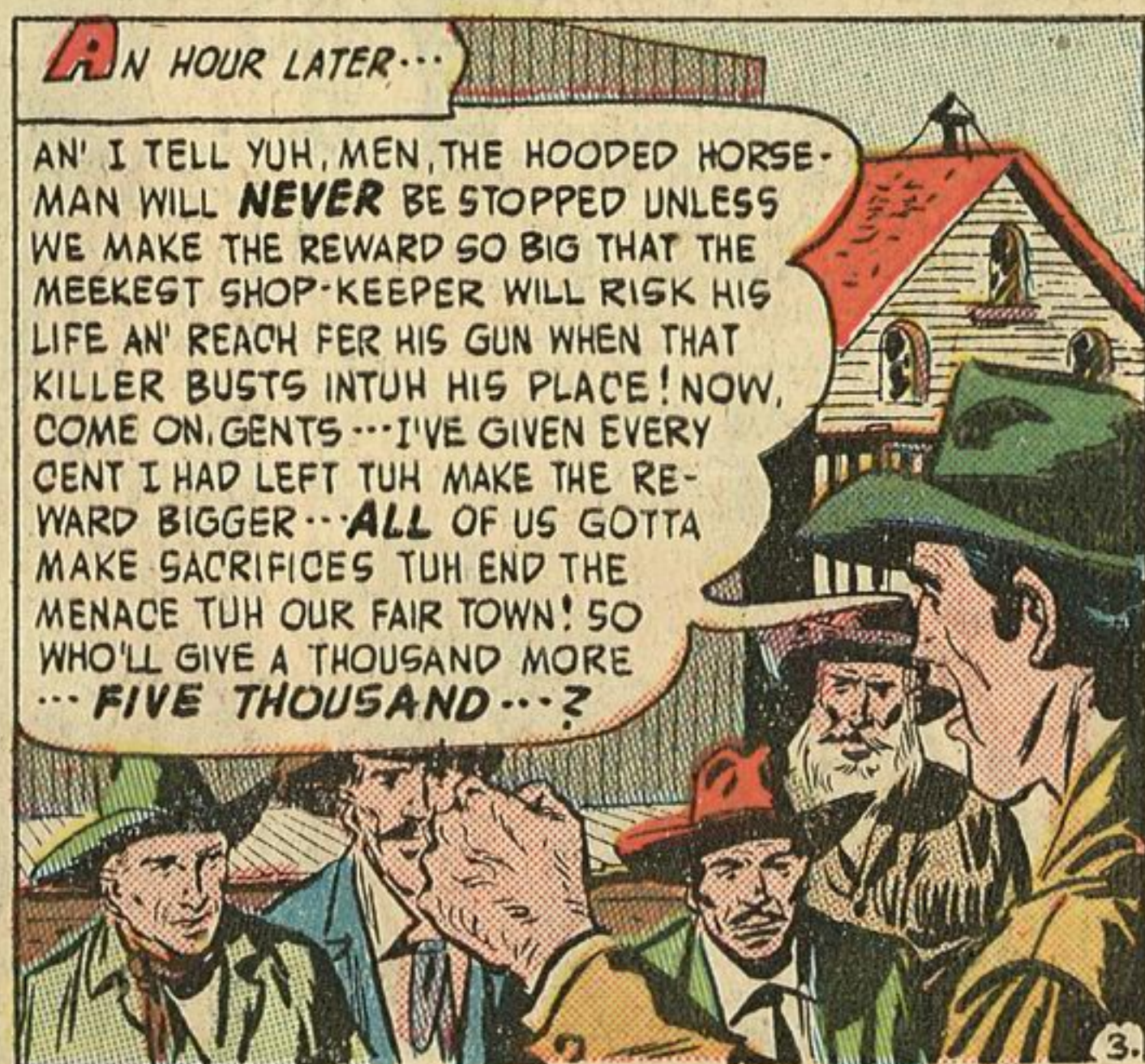
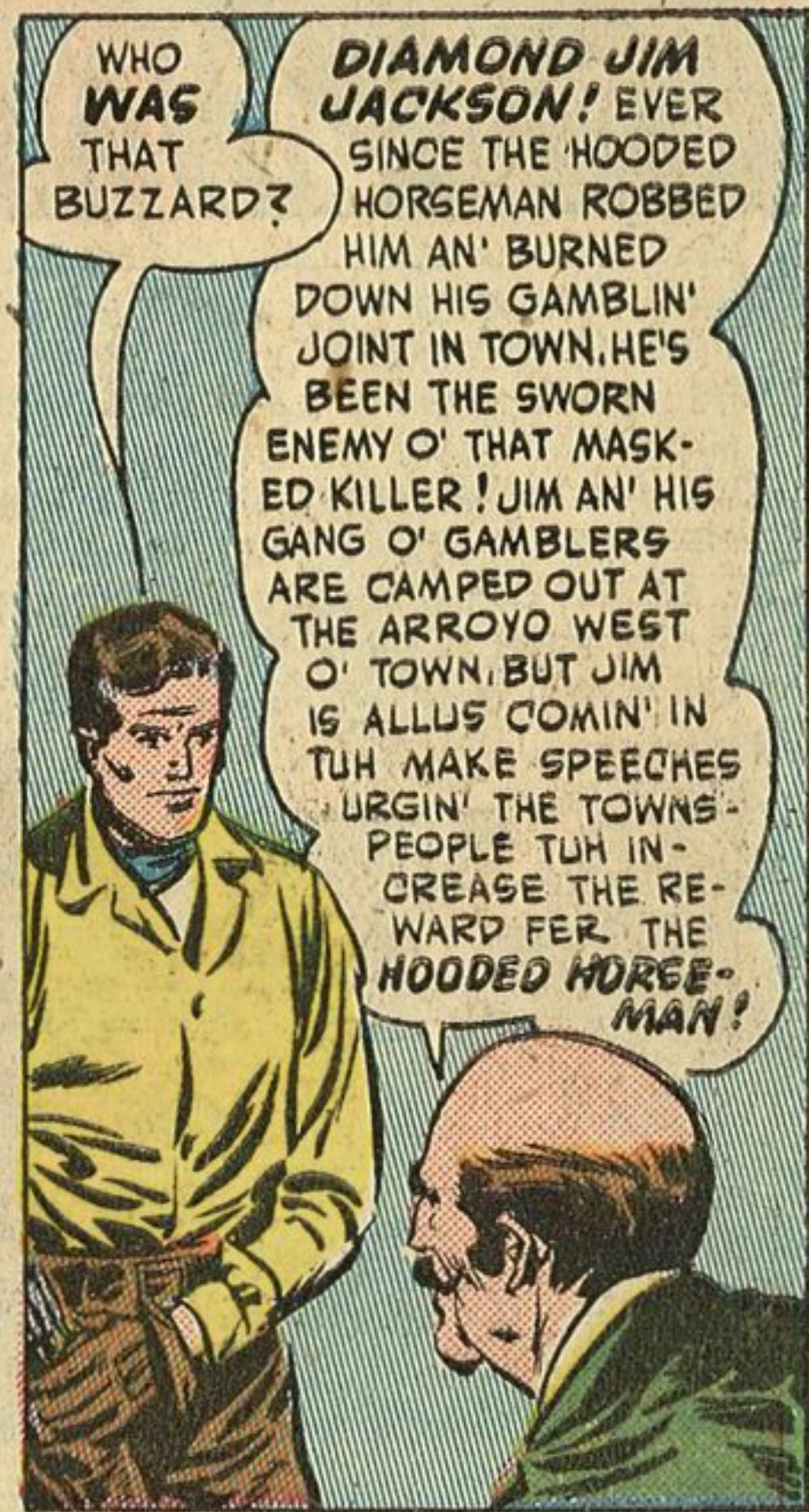
HUH?



WANTED
FOR ROBBERY and MURDER

THE HOODED HORSEMAN
\$10,000 REWARD
DEAD OR ALIVE
ALWAYS SEEN WITH A RED MASK AND A WILD DOG NAMED FLASH.



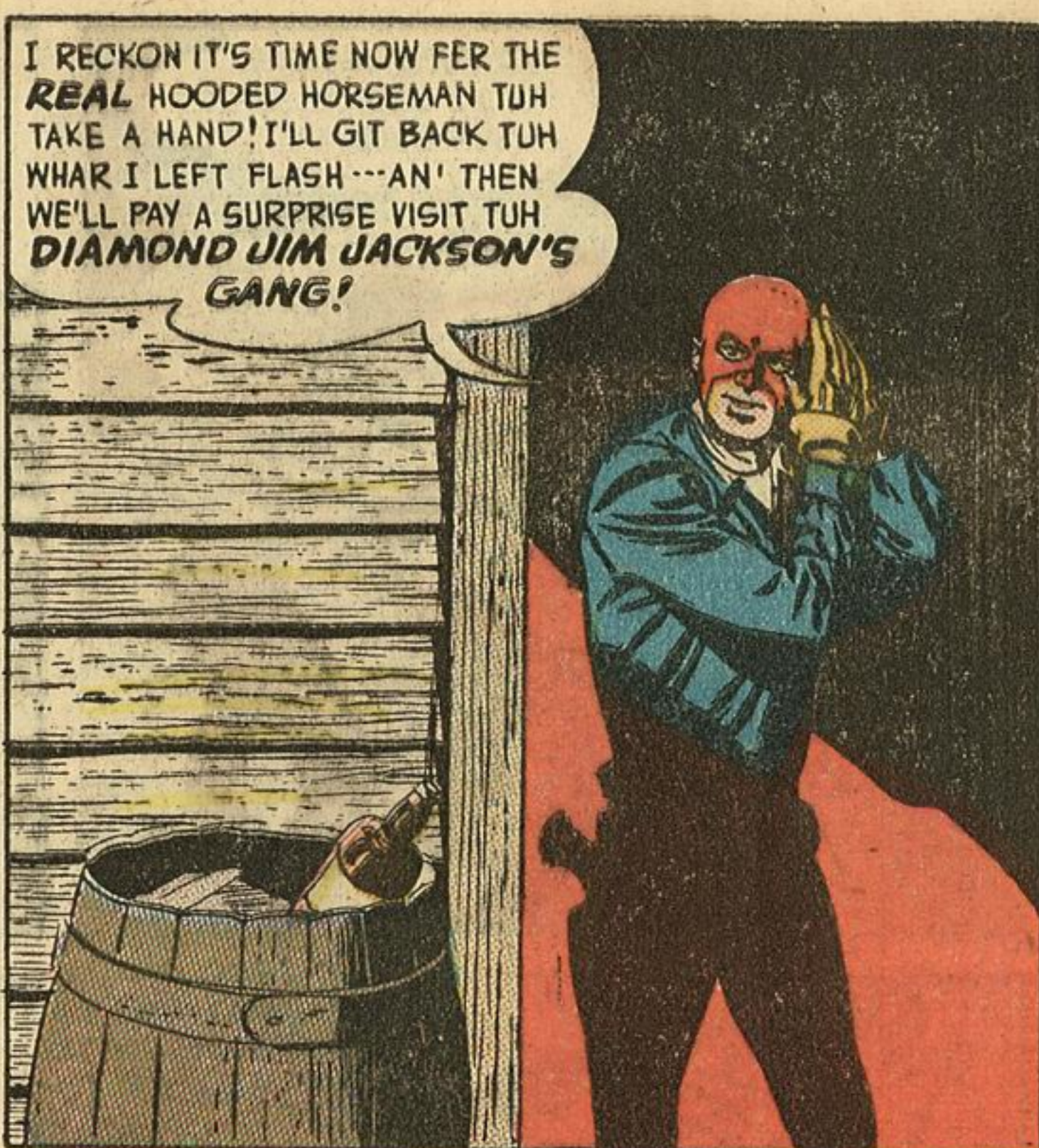




DIAMOND JIM IS RIGHT...I'LL GIVE A THOUSAND MORE!

I'LL PUT UP THREE THOUSAND!

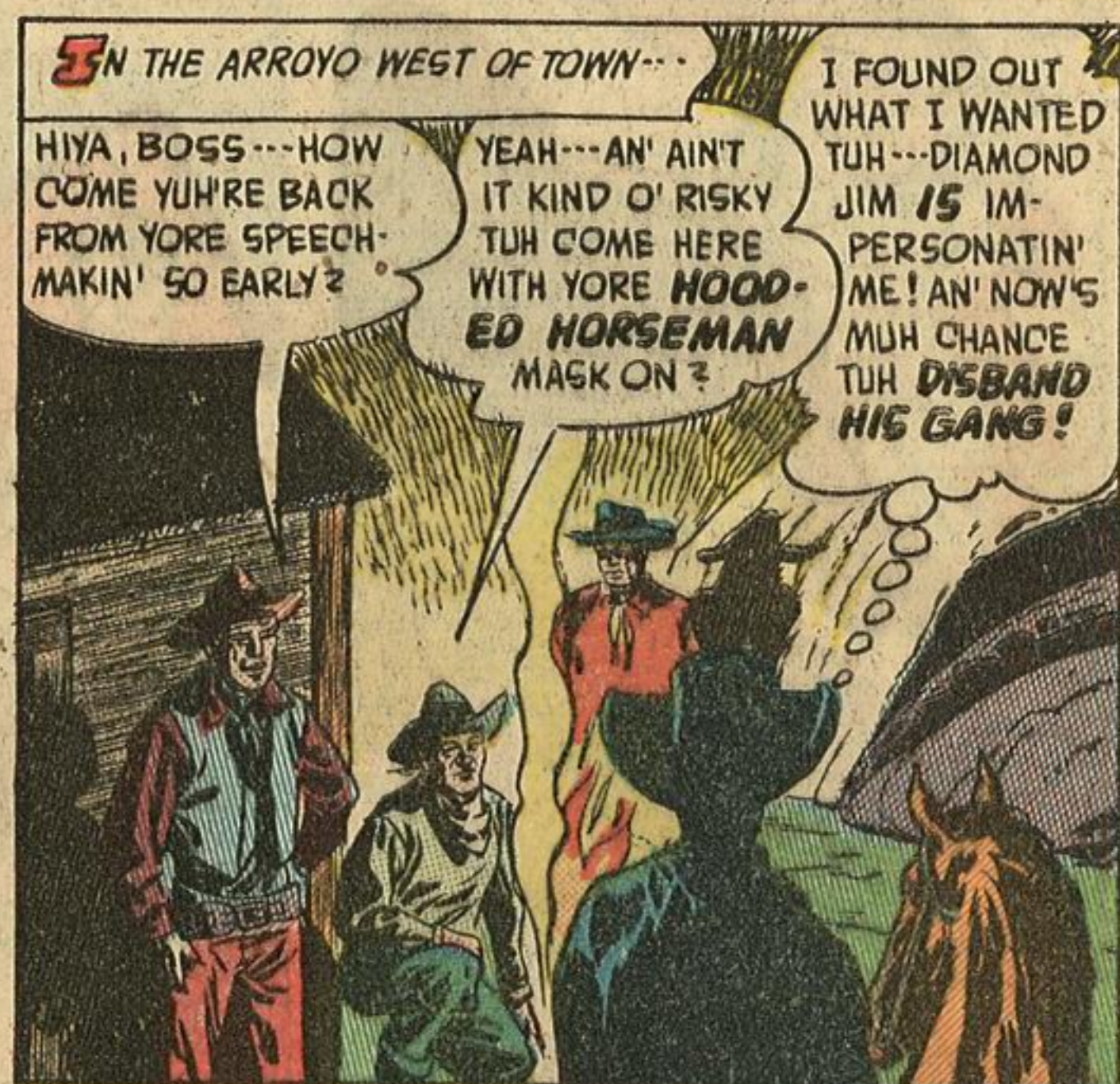
HMM, I'M BEGINNIN' TUH SEE WHAT'S **BEHIND** ALL THIS!



I RECKON IT'S TIME NOW FER THE **REAL** HOODED HORSEMAN TUH TAKE A HAND! I'LL GIT BACK TUH WHAR I LEFT FLASH...AN' THEN WE'LL PAY A SURPRISE VISIT TUH **DIAMOND JIM JACKSON'S GANG!**



THAT'S RIGHT, FLASH...I'M MIGHTY SUSPICIOUS WHEN A GAMBLER LIKE DIAMOND JIM SUDDENLY STARTS MAKIN' SPEECHES IN FAVOR O' **LAW AN' ORDER!** I'VE GOT A HUNCH THAT **HE'S** THE ONE WHO'S BEEN USIN' A HOODED HORSEMAN DISGUISE TUH RUN ROUGH-SHOD OVER THE TOWN...AN' THAT HE WANTS THE AMOUNT O' THE REWARD INCREASED SO THAT **HE** CAN CASH IN ON IT SOMEHOW! AN' I THINK I KNOW JEST HOW TUH **PROVE** MUH HUNCHES!

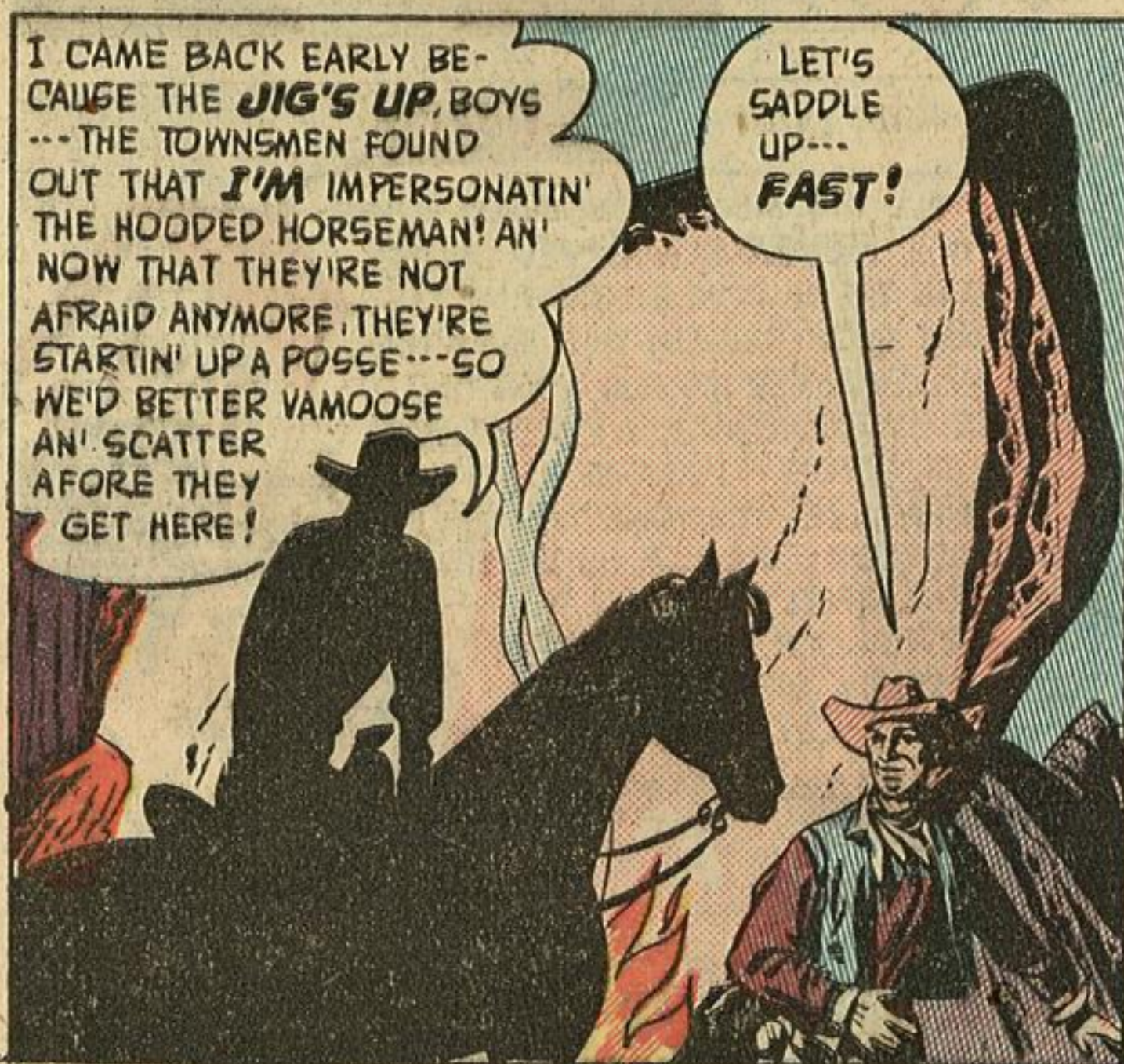


IN THE ARROYO WEST OF TOWN...

HIYA, BOSS...HOW COME YUH'RE BACK FROM YORE SPEECH-MAKIN' SO EARLY?

YEAH...AN' AIN'T IT KIND O' RISKY TUH COME HERE WITH YORE **HOODED HORSEMAN** MASK ON?

I FOUND OUT WHAT I WANTED TUH...DIAMOND JIM **IS** IM-PERSONATIN' ME! AN' NOW'S MUH CHANCE TUH **DISBAND** HIS GANG!



I CAME BACK EARLY BE-CAUSE THE **JIG'S UP**, BOYS...THE TOWNSMEN FOUND OUT THAT **I'M** IMPERSONATIN' THE HOODED HORSEMAN! AN' NOW THAT THEY'RE NOT AFRAID ANYMORE, THEY'RE STARTIN' UP A POSSE...SO WE'D BETTER VAMOOSE AN' SCATTER AFORE THEY GET HERE!

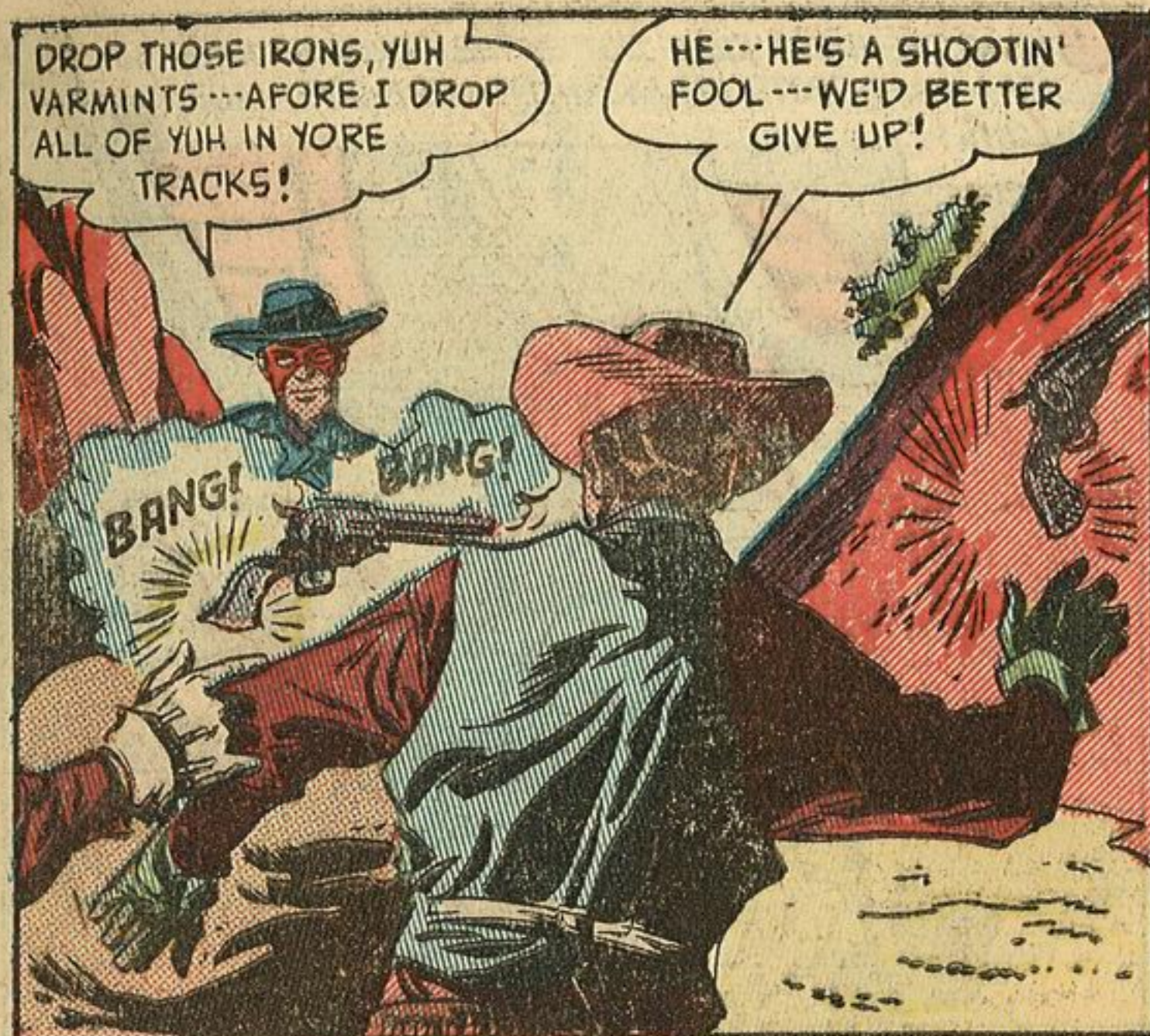
LET'S SADDLE UP...**FAST!**



SUDDENLY...

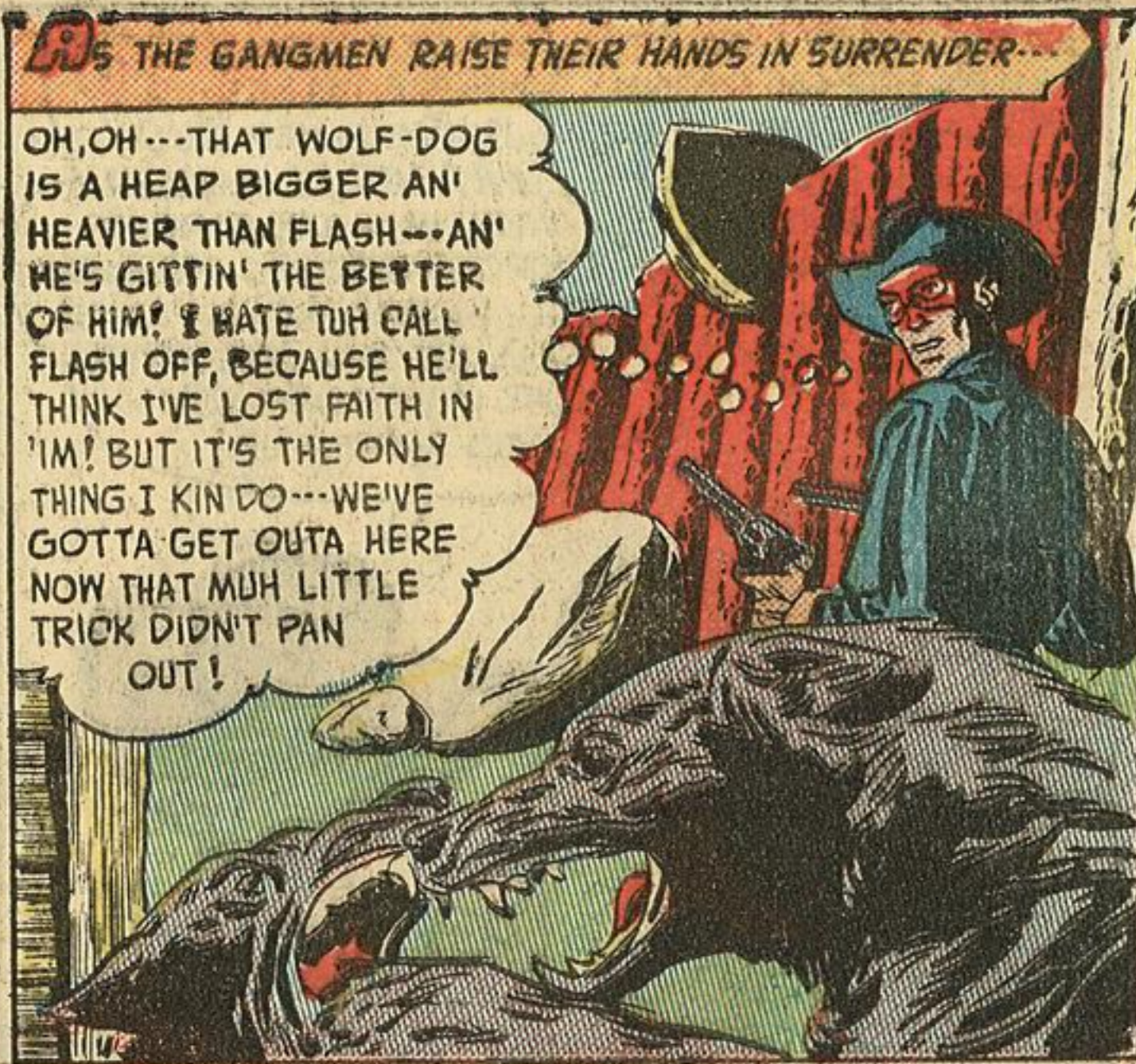
WAIT...THAR'S **OUR** DOG! THIS HOMBRE'S GOT A **DIFFERENT** HOUND...SO HE **CAN'T** BE THE BOSS!

THEN HE MUST BE THE **REAL** HOODED HORSEMAN! LET'S **GIT 'IM!**



DROP THOSE IRONS, YUH
VARMINTS---AFERE I DROP
ALL OF YUH IN YORE
TRACKS!

HE---HE'S A SHOOTIN'
FOOL---WE'D BETTER
GIVE UP!



AS THE GANGMEN RAISE THEIR HANDS IN SURRENDER---

OH, OH---THAT WOLF-DOG
IS A HEAP BIGGER AN'
HEAVIER THAN FLASH---AN'
HE'S GITTIN' THE BETTER
OF HIM! I HATE TUH CALL
FLASH OFF, BECAUSE HE'LL
THINK I'VE LOST FAITH IN
'IM! BUT IT'S THE ONLY
THING I KIN DO---WE'VE
GOTTA GET OUTA HERE
NOW THAT MUH LITTLE
TRICK DIDN'T PAN
OUT!



FLASH TURNS A
BEWILDERED FACE
TOWARD HIS BELOVED
MASTER'S VOICE---
AND HE HESITATES,
HATING TO TURN TAIL!
BUT OBEDIENCE WINS
OUT OVER THE DESIRE
TO REDEEM HIMSELF--



C'MON, FLASH---
GET AWAY FROM
HIM! LET'S MAKE
A RUN FER IT!



I DIDN'T CALL YUH OFF BECAUSE
I THOUGHT YUH COULDN'T WIN!
I'VE STILL GOT FAITH IN YUH---AN'
I'M SURE YUH'LL GIT A CHANCE AT
REVENGE AGAINST THAT WOLF-
HOUND! AN' THE NEXT TIME, I
PROMISE I'LL LET YUH FIGHT
IT OUT TUH THE FINISH!



ON THE CLIFF ABOVE THE ARROYO---

NOW YUH'D BETTER STAY HERE
IN THE BRUSH---WHILE I GO BACK
TUH TOWN AS BUD FRASER! I'LL
TRY TUH FIND OUT WHAR
DIAMOND JIM IS LIKELY TUH
STRIKE---SO THAT **WE'LL**
BE READY FER THEM!



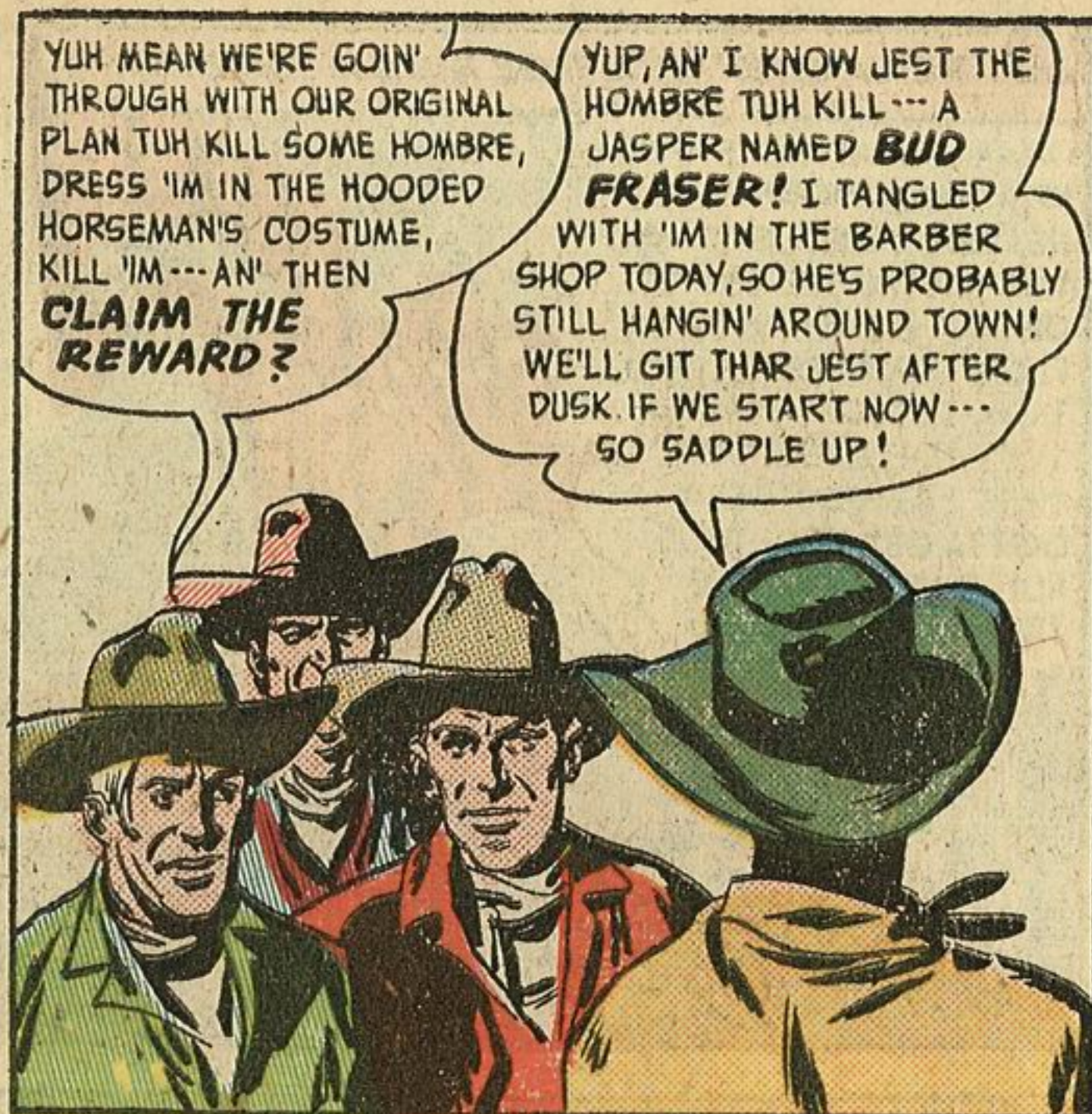
LATER, DOWN IN DIAMOND JIM'S CAMP---

HIYA, BOYS---I GOT GOOD NEWS! I
TALKED THE TOWNSMEN INTUH IN-
CREASIN' THE REWARD FER THE
HOODED HORSEMAN TUH
FIFTY THOUSAND!

WE GOT
BAD NEWS
FER YUH, BOSS
---THE **REAL**
HOODED
HORSEMAN
WAS HERE!



SO HE'S ON TUH US, EH? WAL, I'D
FIGGERED ON PULLIN' A FEW MORE
HOLDUPS AFERE CASHIN' IN ON THAT
REWARD MONEY, BUT NOW I RECKON
WE'LL HAVE TUH GIT THAT FIFTY
GRAND FAST---AFERE THE TOWNS-
MEN FIND OUT THAR ARE **TWO**
HOODED HORSEMEN!



THAT KICK RAISED A LUMP ON HIS HEAD AS BIG AS AN EGG, BOSS... THE MASK DOESN'T FIT OVER IT!

BLAST IT... THAT MEANS WE'LL HAVE TUH MAKE ONE MORE RAID! THE ONLY PLACE WHAR WE KIN GIT MORE RED CLOTH TUH MAKE ANOTHER MASK IS THE GENERAL STORE... AN' SINCE IT'S CLOSED NOW, WE'LL HAVE TUH **BUST** INTUH IT! TIE AN' GAG FRASER... WE'LL LEAVE THE HOUND TUH GUARD 'IM IN THE ALLEY WHILE WE'RE GONE!



BUT MINUTES LATER, FLASH FOLLOWS THE SCENT OF HIS CANINE ENEMY TO THE DARK ALLEYWAY... WHERE ANOTHER SCENT IS WAFTED HIS WAY... THAT OF HIS ENDANGERED MASTER! AND AS THE WOLF-DOG SNARLS AROUND BUD'S HELPLESS BODY, A FIERCE, CHALLENGING GROWL BURSTS FROM FLASH'S THROAT...



THE WOLF-DOG WHIRLS, RETURNS THE CHALLENGE... AND THE TWO BEASTS MEET IN DEADLY COMBAT BEFORE THE EYES OF THE NOW CONSCIOUS BUD!



BUT THIS TIME FLASH IS FIGHTING FOR HIS MASTER'S LIFE AS WELL AS HIS OWN... AND SPURRED ON BY THE NEED TO VINDICATE HIMSELF IN BUD'S EYES, FLASH SAVAGELY CLAWS AND RIPS HIS WAY TO VICTORY!

FLASH HAS THE WOLF-DOG'S THROAT IN A DEATH-GRIP... HE **DID** IT!



THEN, WITH ALMOST HUMAN INTELLIGENCE...



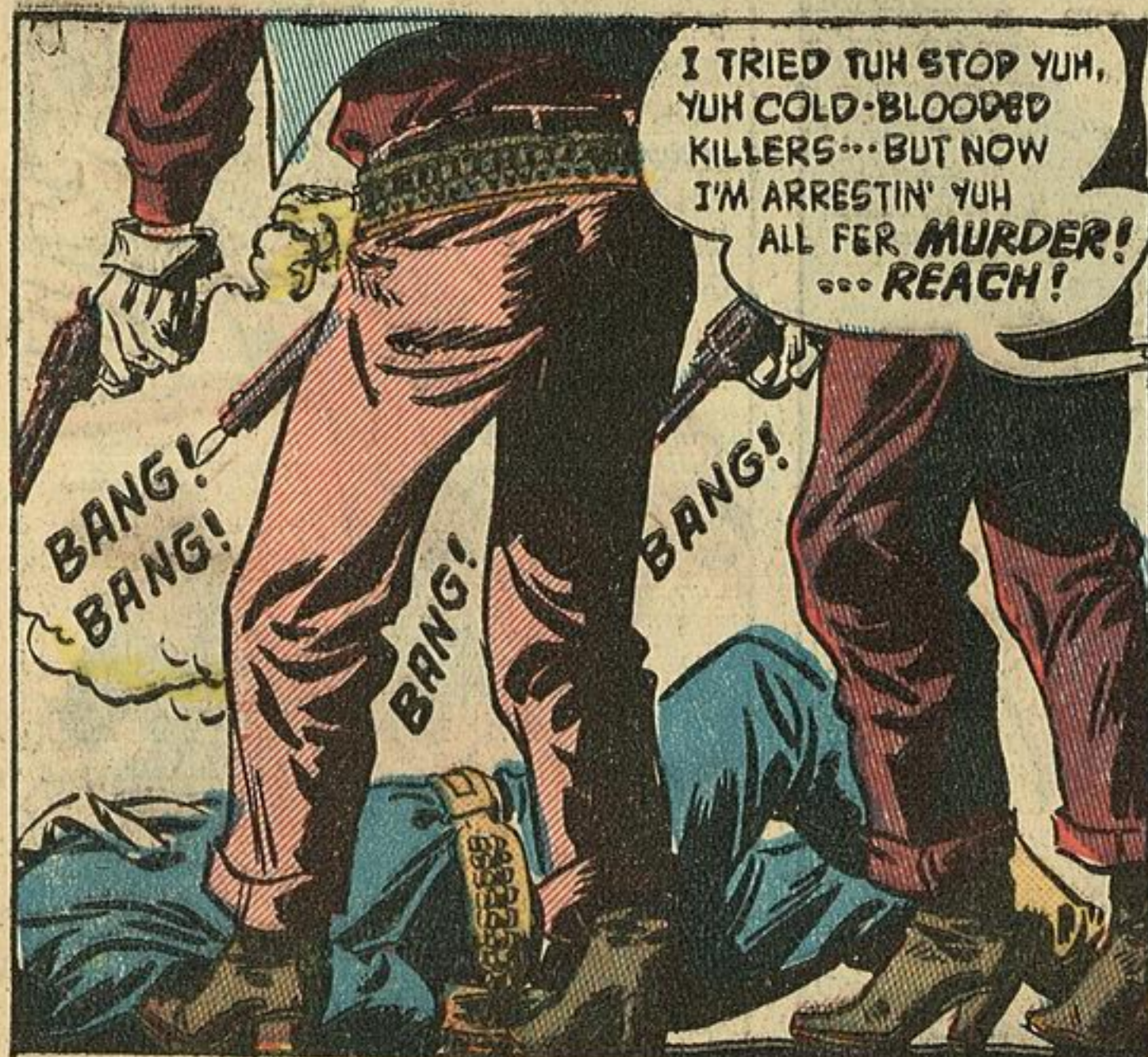
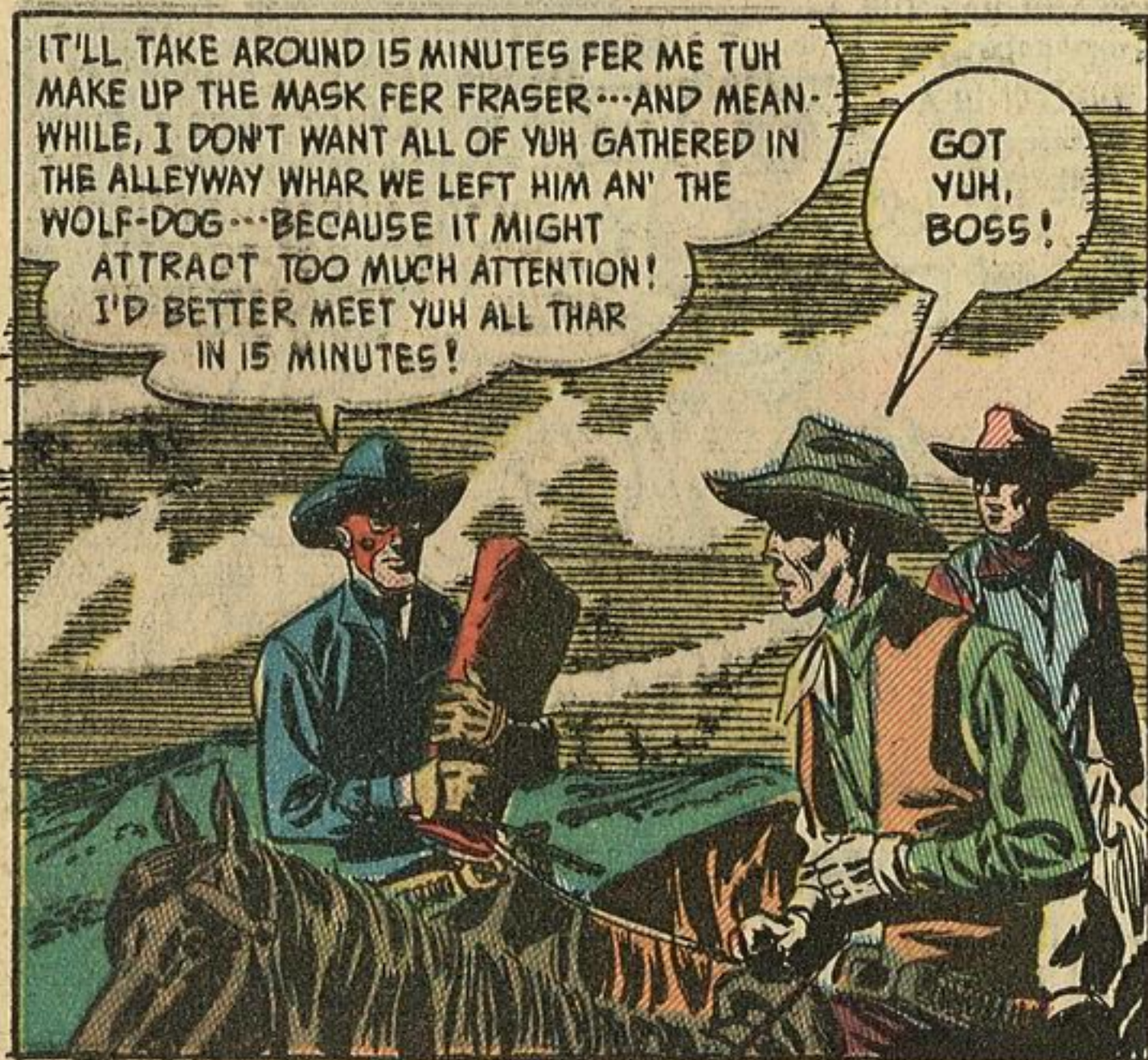
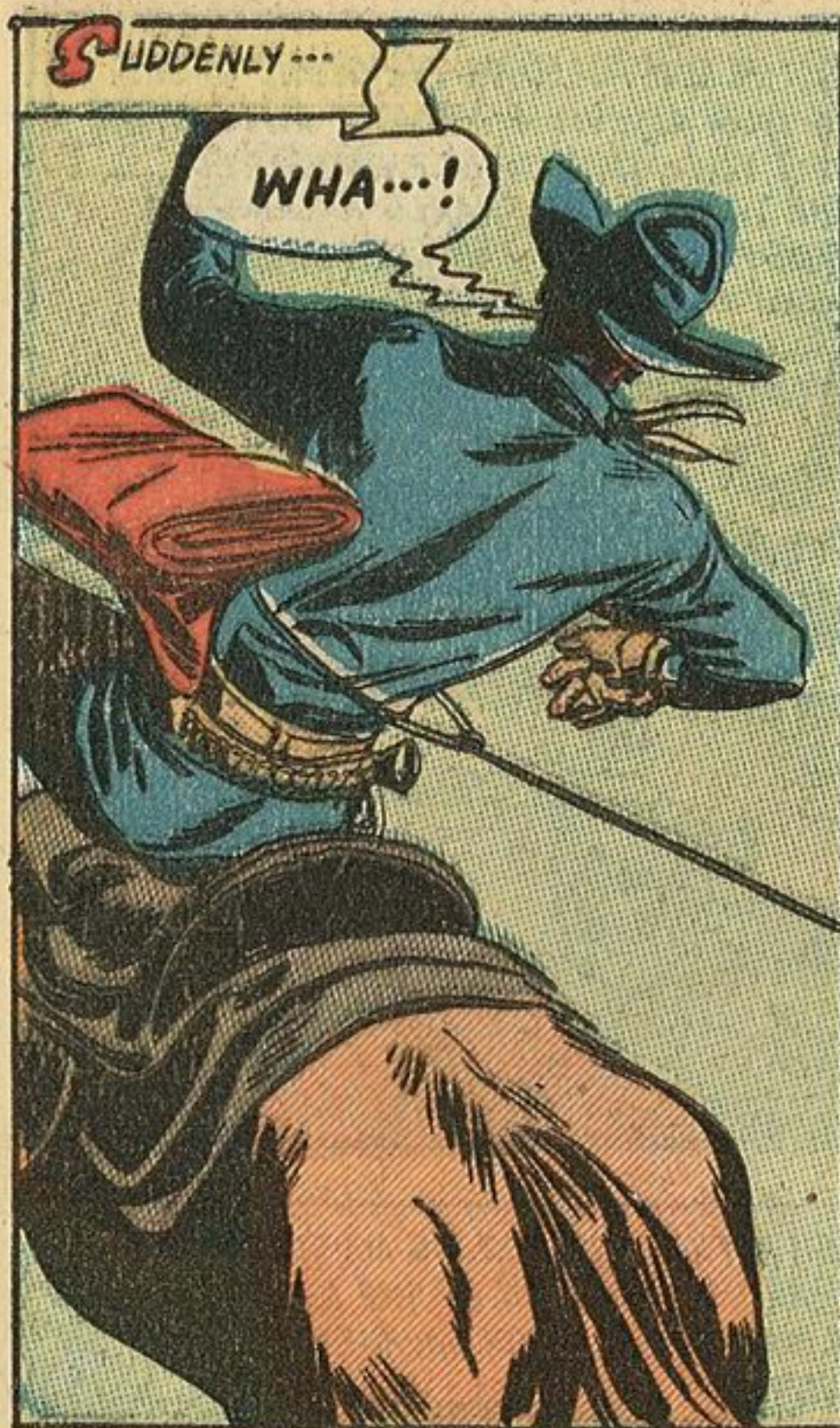
GOOD BOY, FLASH! NOW I'LL PUT ON THE MASK I HAD HIDDEN INSIDE MUH SHIRT AN' HEAD FER THE SOUND O' THOSE SHOTS... BECAUSE **THAT'S** WHAR I'M SHORE I'LL FIND THE **PHONEY** HOODED HORSEMAN!

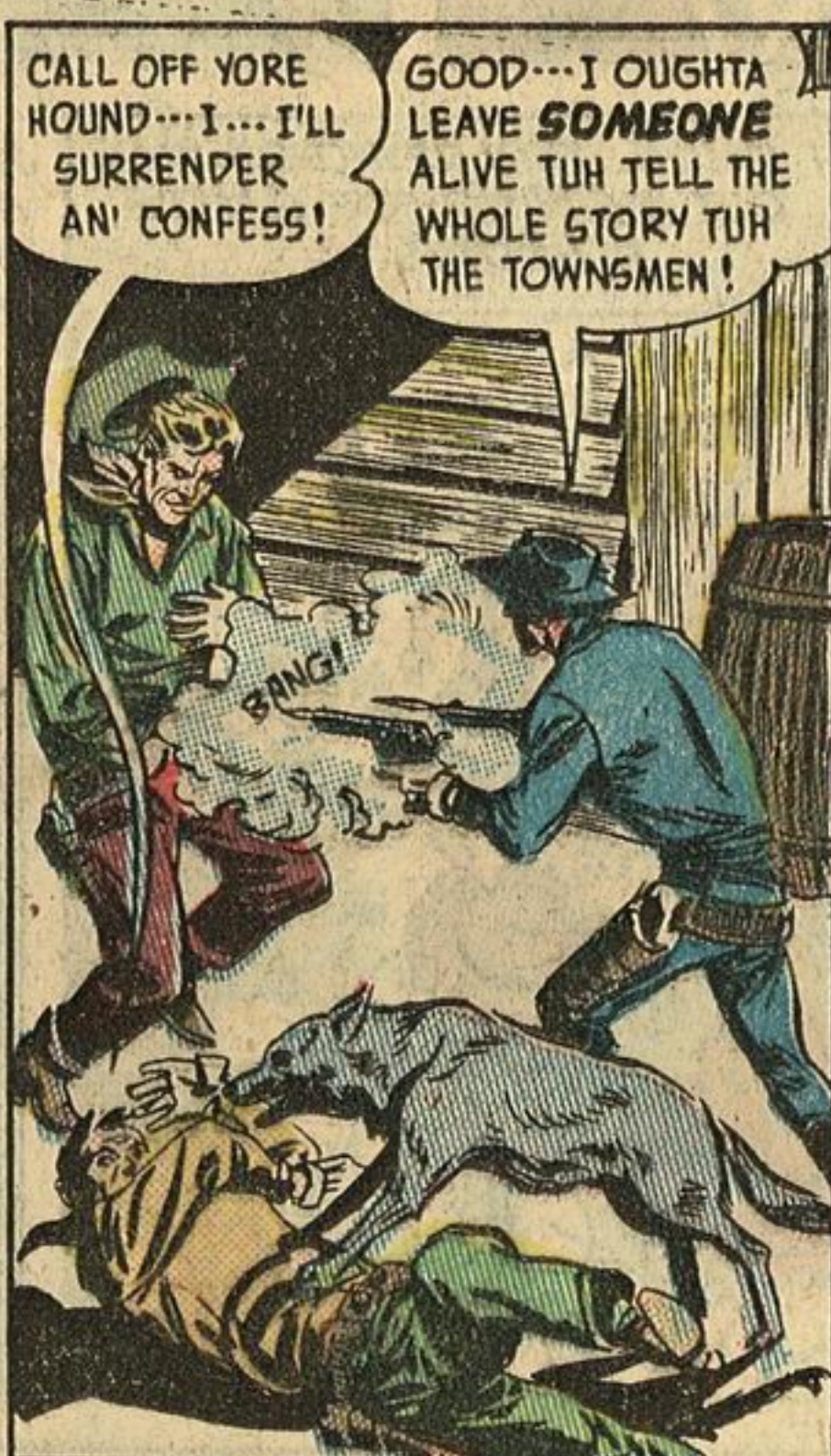
BANG! BANG!



HAW-HAW, JEST LOOK AT THOSE YELLOW-LIVERED HOMBRES COWERIN' THAR... THEY'RE SO AFRAID O' THE HOODED HORSEMAN THAT THEY WON'T EVEN SWAP LEAD WITH ME! GO ON, BOYS... I'LL COVER YORE GETAWAY!







Buried WESTERN TREASURE

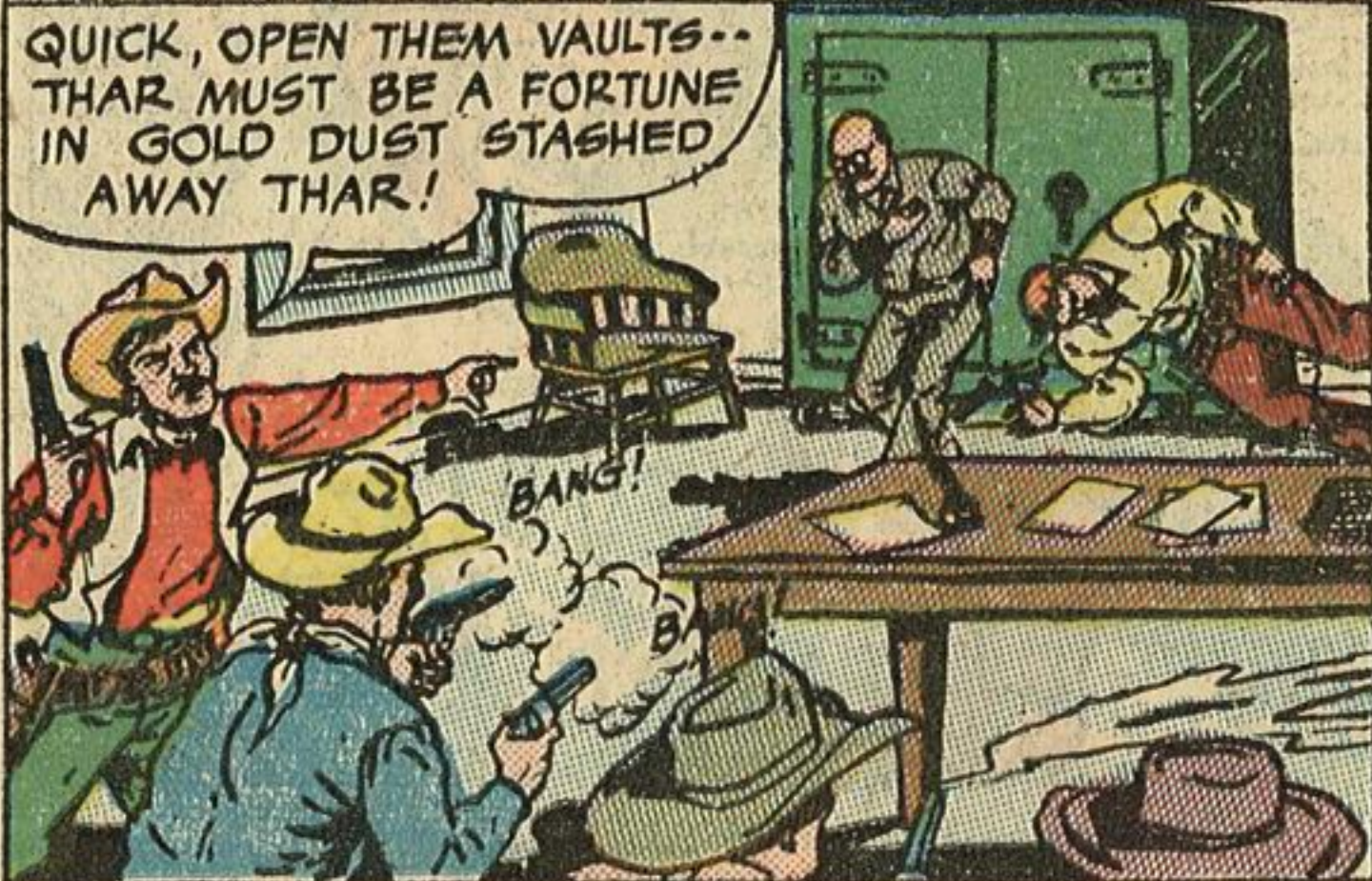
ONE OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS OUTLAW GANGS OF THE 1860'S WAS LED BY JOHN AND JIM REYNOLDS-- A BAND OF 24 MEN WHO ATTACKED AND PLUNDERED WAGON TRAINS ON THE SANTA FE TRAIL!

GOOD SHOOTIN'-- NOW LET'S GIT THOSE MONEY-BOXES!



WITH A LOOT OF \$40,000 IN CURRENCY AND OVER \$10,000 IN GOLD DUST, THE BANDITS RODE UP THE ARKANSAS, WAYLAYING TRAVELERS, ROBBING RANCHERS, AND HOLDING UP STAGECOACHES-- AND THEN, IN SOUTH PARK, COLORADO, THE REYNOLDS GANG MADE THEIR BIGGEST HAUL AS THEY SMASHED THEIR WAY INTO A WELLS FARGO STAGE STATION!

QUICK, OPEN THEM VAULTS-- THAR MUST BE A FORTUNE IN GOLD DUST STASHED AWAY THAR!



HAVING GATHERED AN UNTOLD FORTUNE IN GOLD DUST, THE BANDITS RODE DOWN THE NORTH FORK OF THE SOUTH PLATTE AND CAMPED IN A THICK GROVE OF PINE TREES NEAR THE MOUTH OF GENEVA CREEK!

A DOZEN DIFFERENT POSSES ARE SCOURIN' THE WOODS FER US! WE'D BETTER GO UP THE CREEK AND BURY ALL THIS LOOT-- WE KIN COME BACK FER IT WHEN THE HEAT'S OFF!



BUT WHILE JOHN REYNOLDS WAS OUT BURYING THE GANG'S PLUNDER...



JOHN REYNOLDS ALONE ESCAPED-- BUT MONTHS LATER, WHEN HE WAS RETURNING TO DIG UP THE TREASURE WITH ANOTHER DESPERADO NAMED BROWN, A MOUNTAINEER RECOGNIZED THE FAMED OUTLAW!



BROWN SHOT THE MOUNTAINEER-- BUT REYNOLDS WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED! AS HE LAY DYING, REYNOLDS REVEALED THE SECRET OF THE BURIED TREASURE!

YUH GO UP A LITTLE WAYS ALONG GENEVA CREEK-- AN' AT THE HEAD O' THE GULCH, TURN TUH THE RIGHT AN' FOLLOW THE MOUNTAIN AROUND TUH THE HEAD O' DEER CREEK! I... I BURIED ALL THE GOLD DUST AND THE \$40,000 IN GREEN-BACKS, WRAPPED IN SILK OIL CLOTH, IN AN OLD PROSPECT HOLE AT ABOUT TIMBERLINE! THEN I FILLED THE HOLE UP WITH STONES... STUCK AN OLD BUTCHER KNIFE IN A TREE ABOUT 4 FEET FROM THE GROUND, BROKE THE HANDLE OFF, AN' LEFT IT POINTIN' TUH THE MOUTH OF THE HOLE!



WITH A FINAL EFFORT, REYNOLDS SKETCHED A CRUDE MAP-- BUT BROWN WAS KILLED OFF BY A POSSE BEFORE HE COULD FIND THE TREASURE! AND YEARS LATER, WHEN GENERAL COOK CAME IN POSSESSION OF REYNOLDS' MAP--

THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THE TREASURE IS STILL HIDDEN IN THE MOUNTAINS... AND SOMEONE MAY YET BE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO FIND IT!



BUT NO ONE HAS FOUND IT YET-- AND THE BURIED TREASURE IS STILL THERE, PERHAPS WAITING FOR YOU, READER!

The End



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"Breakfast of Champions"



The PERFECT SHOT

"SHERIFF, YUH CAN'T go through with this!" one of the townsmen said violently. "Yuh know that Killer Barton's faster on the draw than yuh are...yuh'll jest end up, as another notch on that coyote's .44!"

A murmur of assent ran around the group of ranchers and townsmen crowded into Sheriff Rusty Miller's small office. The sheriff had been hearing talk like this for the last half-hour, ever since Killer Barton had sent in the message that he'd be waiting for Rusty Miller at the edge of town at dusk...and if Miller didn't show up, the message added, Barton and his gang would shoot up and burn all the outlying, isolated ranch-houses.

But now the sheriff was tired of hearing all the words of caution from the townsmen, and standing up and glaring at them, he said, "I'm a-goin' out thar...an' that's all thar is tuh it! We don't have a big enough posse in town tuh tangle with Barton's gang...so whether it's suicide or not, I'm gonna meet 'im alone! If I win, mebbe his gang'll break up an' scatter...an' if I lose, mebbe Barton'll be satisfied an' leave without botherin' them outlyin' ranchers. An' now ... clear outa here ... all of yuh!"

The townsmen reluctantly shuffled out, closing the door behind them...and the sheriff took down his twin holsters from the wall and buckled them around his waist. As he hefted the two long-barreled .44's in his hands, a flood of remembrance swept over him. These were the guns he had used in his youth, when he had trailed along with his dad's two-bit carnival. It was his father, a famous marksman in his day, who had taught Rusty how to draw and shoot...just as he had taught Rusty's friend, Hank Barton.

The two of them, Rusty and Hank, had become two of the best shots in the West, putting on trick shooting performances for

the carny. But Hank had always been a shade faster than Rusty...as he proved the day he held up the carnival, stole the whole season's receipts, killed Rusty's dad...and outdrew Rusty himself, shooting the guns right out of his hands. After that, Barton became Killer Barton, head of a gang of ruthless gunmen...while Rusty went on to become a sheriff, always proclaiming that he would get his father's killer some day.

And the proclamations had worked...for apparently Barton had heard of them, and had returned to challenge the sheriff...which was just what Rusty had been praying for.

An hour later, as the sun dipped over the western horizon, Sheriff Rusty Miller rode grimly to meet the killer who was waiting for him.

"Start drawin' any time yuh want tuh, sheriff," Barton called as soon as they got within shouting distance. Rusty didn't answer him, but drew slowly nearer...nearer. When the two men were within .44 shooting range, and Rusty still hadn't drawn, Barton sneered, "What's the matter, sheriff...don't yuh trust yore eyesight or yore .44's anymore?"

Rusty merely kept on riding closer, closer...and when the two men were a scant twenty paces apart, the sheriff saw a frown of suspicion cross Barton's face. That was when Rusty made his move, darting his hand down to his gun. A brief moment later, two guns barked...but it was Barton who slumped to the ground, a bullet in his heart. And as Barton's demoralized gunmen broke and scattered, Rusty said grimly to the dead man, "Thanks fer lettin' me git intuh .38 shootin' distance, yuh varmint! Yuh see, I didn't use muh long-barreled .44's, but a short-barreled .38...because a short barrel draws a shade faster'n a long one...jest enough tuh shade yuh!"

Buffalo **BELLE**



THE CHEROKEE STRIP HAD ITS SHARE OF OUTLAWS AND HORSE THIEVES--DERRINGER-PACKING GAMBLERS WHO PLIED THEIR CROOKED TRADE IN THE EMIGRANT CAMPS--RENEGADES WHO SLIPPED UP FROM TEXAS TO STOCK GUNS FOR THE WARRING COMANCHES! BUT NONE OF THESE COULD WHIP UP AS MUCH WRATH AMONG THE STOCKMEN AS A SHERIFF CHARGED WITH MURDER--GIVING BUFFALO BELLE TRENT A CHOICE BETWEEN UPHOLDING THE LAW--OR STANDING BY THE MAN SHE CALLED "PARD"!

ONE NIGHT--OUTSIDE A LONELY RANCH--

WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YUH UP TUH, WHIPLASH? WE'VE HOLED IN BACK IN TOWN FER A WEEK, SPYIN' ON SHERIFF HANLEY--AN' *NOW* YUH'RE FIXIN' TUH PLUG OL' PETE GARNET!

YEP--AN' YUH'LL SAWVY WHY PURTY SOON!

DON'T KNOW WHO *THAT* COULD BE! BUT LEAST-WISE THIS ISN'T LIKE THE OLD DAYS--WHEN YUH NEEDED A GUN IN YORE HAND EVERY TIME YUH OPENED YORE DOOR!

NOK
NOK



IN THE NEXT INSTANT--UNARMED AND WITH A SMILE OF WELCOME FROZEN ON HIS FACE--



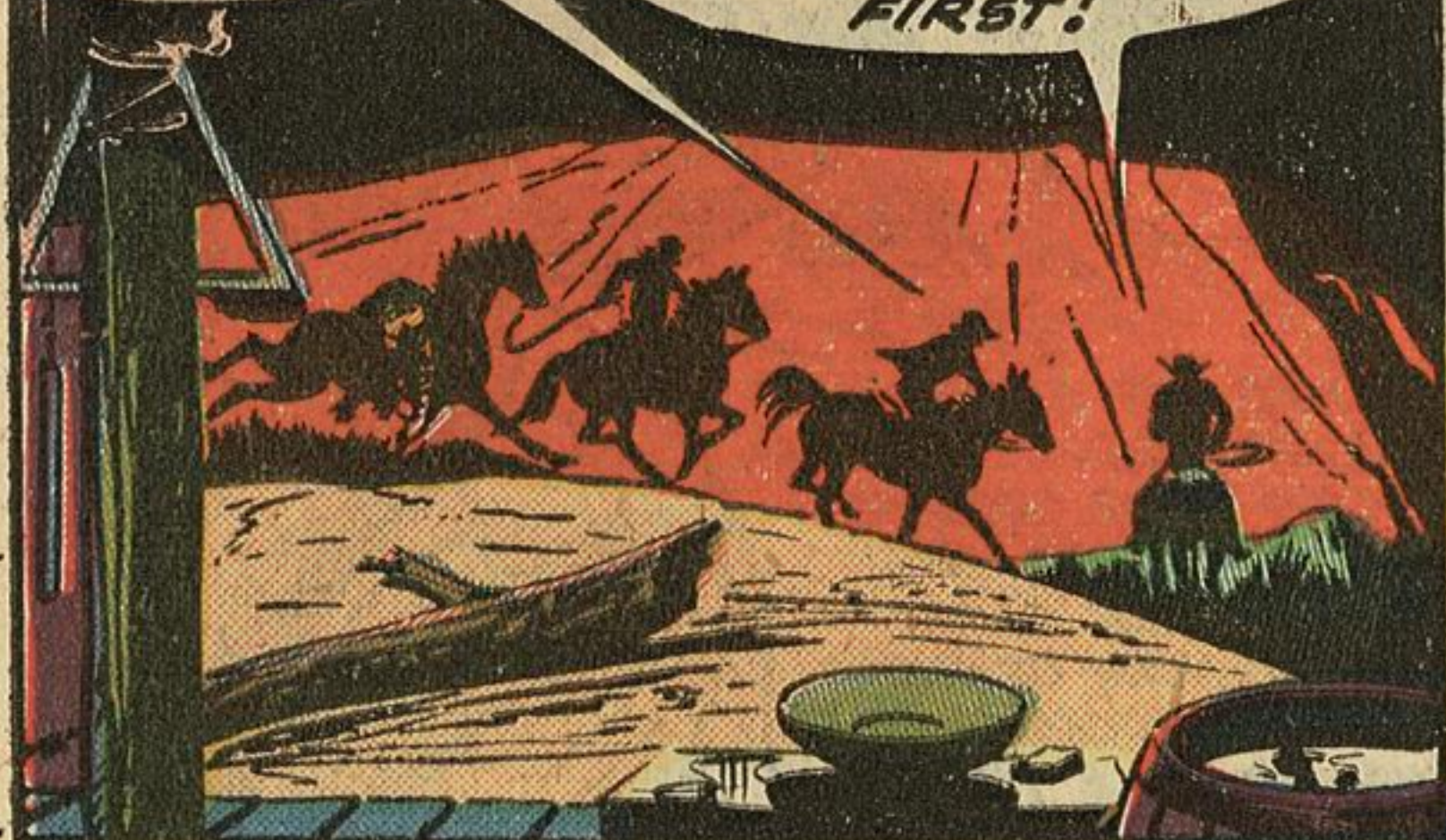
I DUNNO ABOUT THIS, WHIP-LASH! WE RODE INTUH THE CHEROKEE STRIP FER RUSTLIN' --NOT COLD-BLOODED MURDER!

I'VE *STILL* GOT RUSTLIN' IN MIND! TOTE HIM OUT TUH THAT SPARE HOSS-- AN' LET'S MAKE TRACKS!



CAN'T FIGGER WHY YUH'RE ASKIN' FER TROUBLE, WHIPLASH-- AFTER SAYIN' WHAT A TOUGH HOMBRE SHERIFF LUKE HANLEY IS!

SHORE--HE'S PURE PIZEN WHEN IT COMES TUH DEALIN' WITH OUT-LAWS--ESPECIALLY WITH A RIPROARIN' DEPUTY LIKE BUFFALO BELLE TRENT! THAT'S WHY THAR WON'T BE ANY RUSTLIN' FER *US*--UNLESS WE DO SOMETHIN' ABOUT HIM *FIRST!*



MEBBE *AMBUSHIN'* THE SHERIFF WOULD BE THE *EASIEST* WAY--BUT IT'D BE A SHORE SIGN THAT OUTLAWRY'S READY TUH POP IN THE CHEROKEE STRIP--AN' *THAT'D* MEAN PUTTIN' THE STOCKMEN ON THEIR GUARD! BUT S'POSE WE KIN FIX THINGS SO LUKE HANLEY WINDS UP IN HIS OWN HOOSGOW --WITH A CHARGE O' MURDER OVER HIS HEAD?



AN HOUR LATER--

THAR THEY COME! YUH TWO KEEP ON THE LOOKOUT--WHILE I DUCK AROUND TUH THE BACK O' THE CAFÉ!

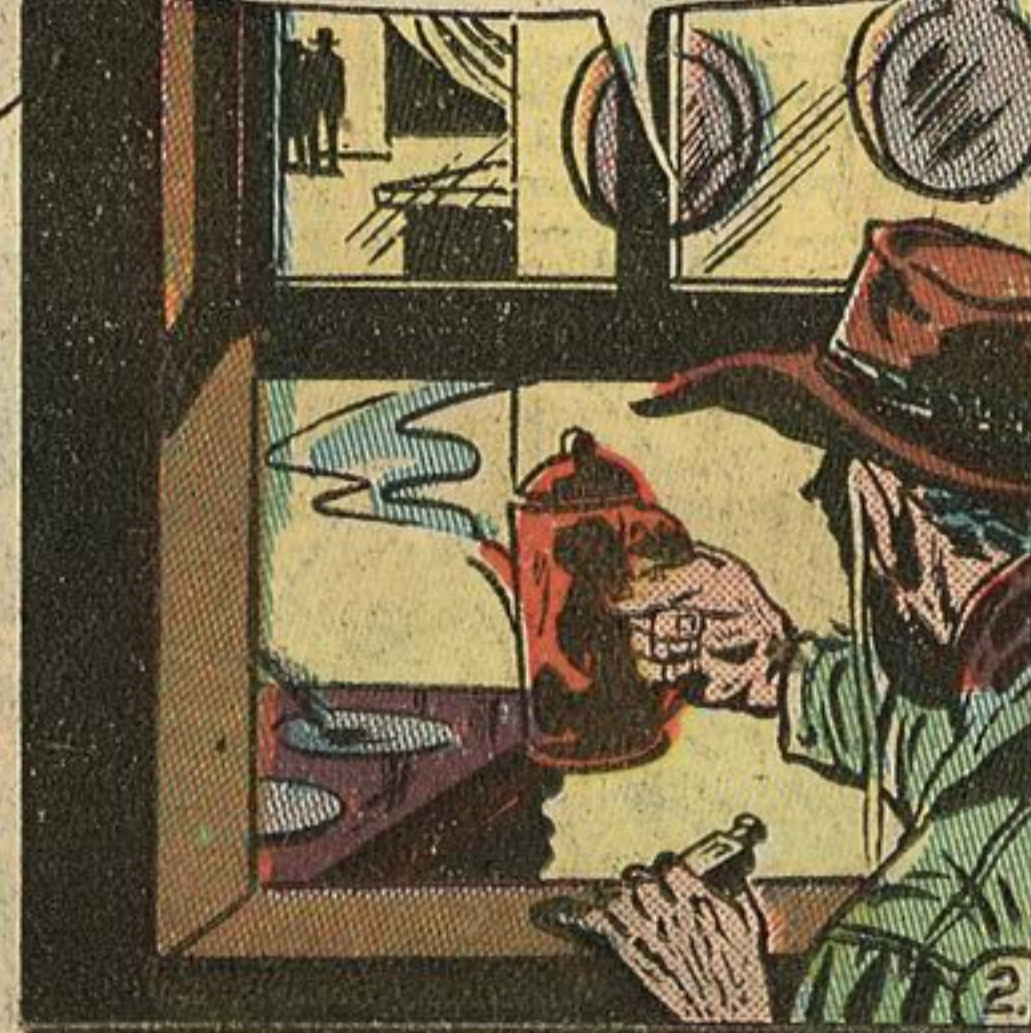


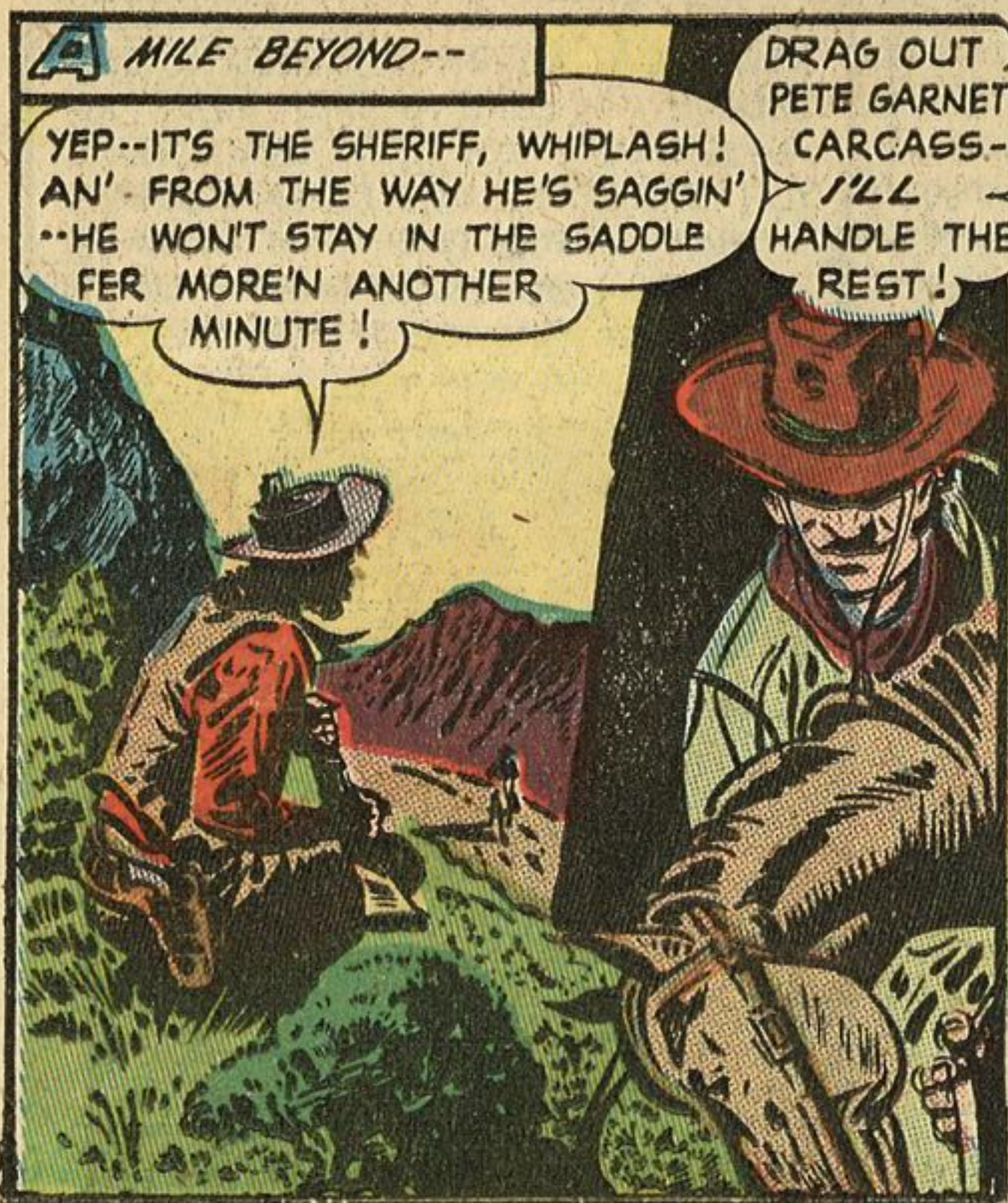
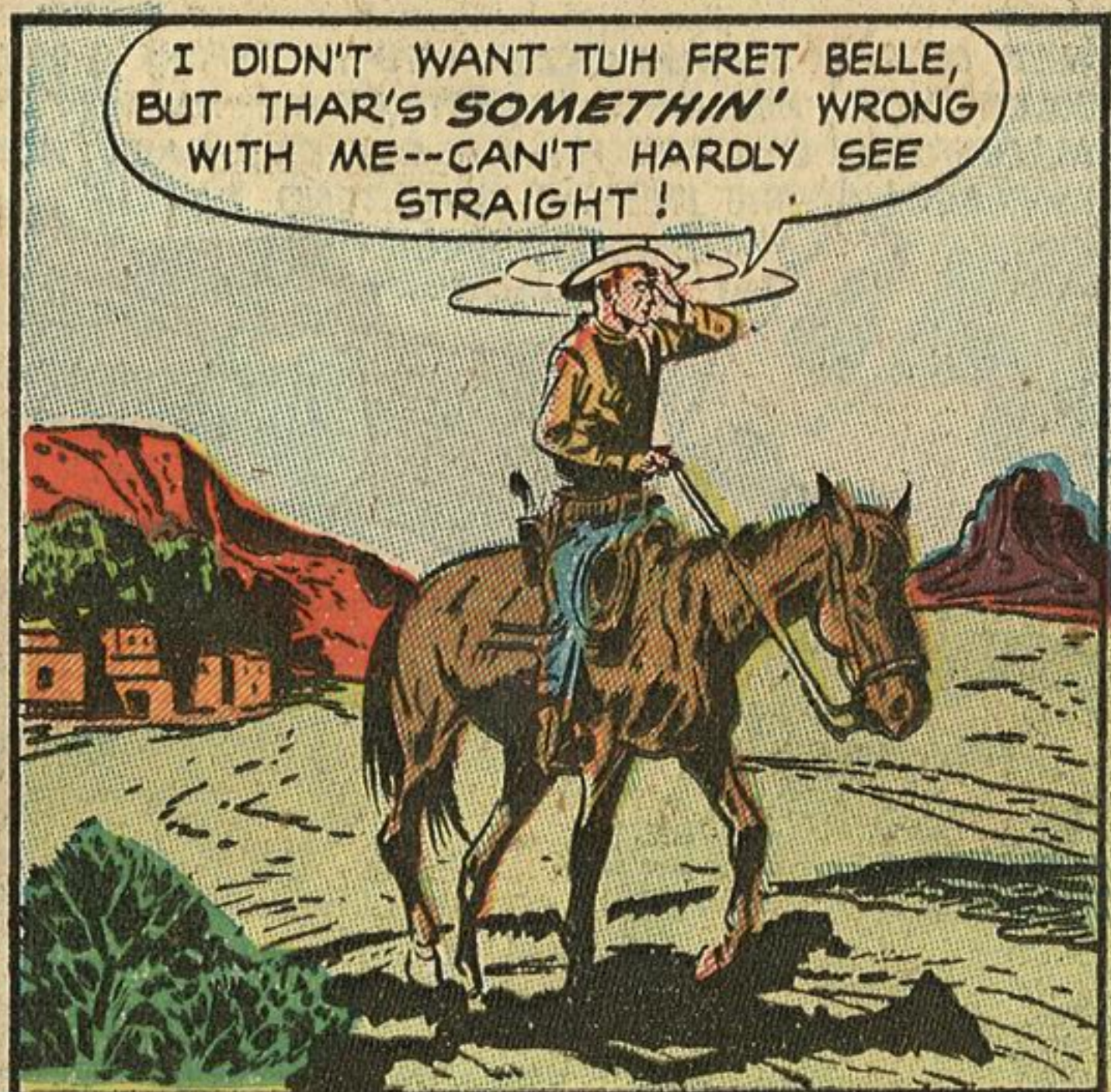
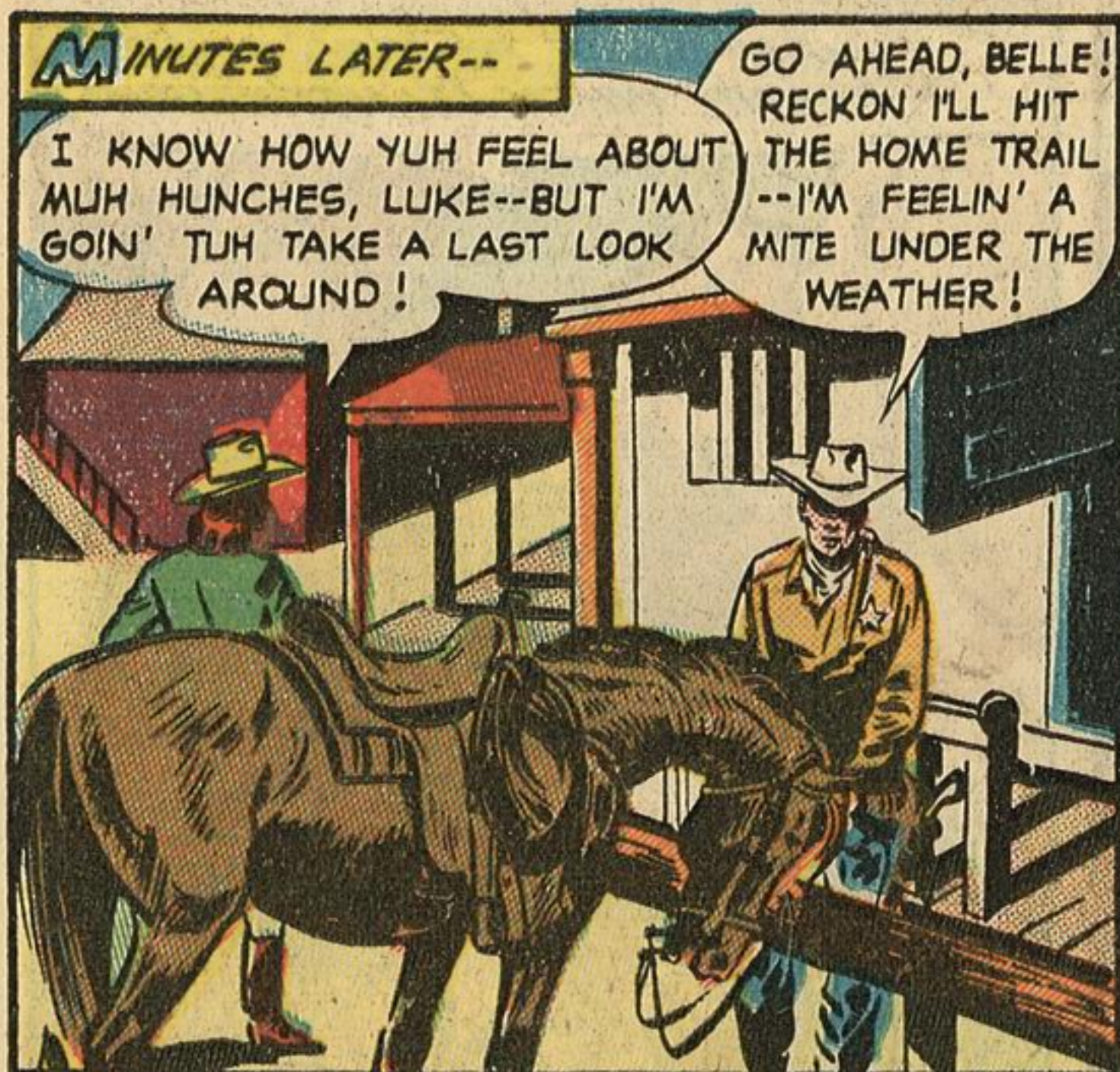
RECKON WE KIN CALL IT A NIGHT, BELLE-- THE TOWN'S PURTY QUIET!

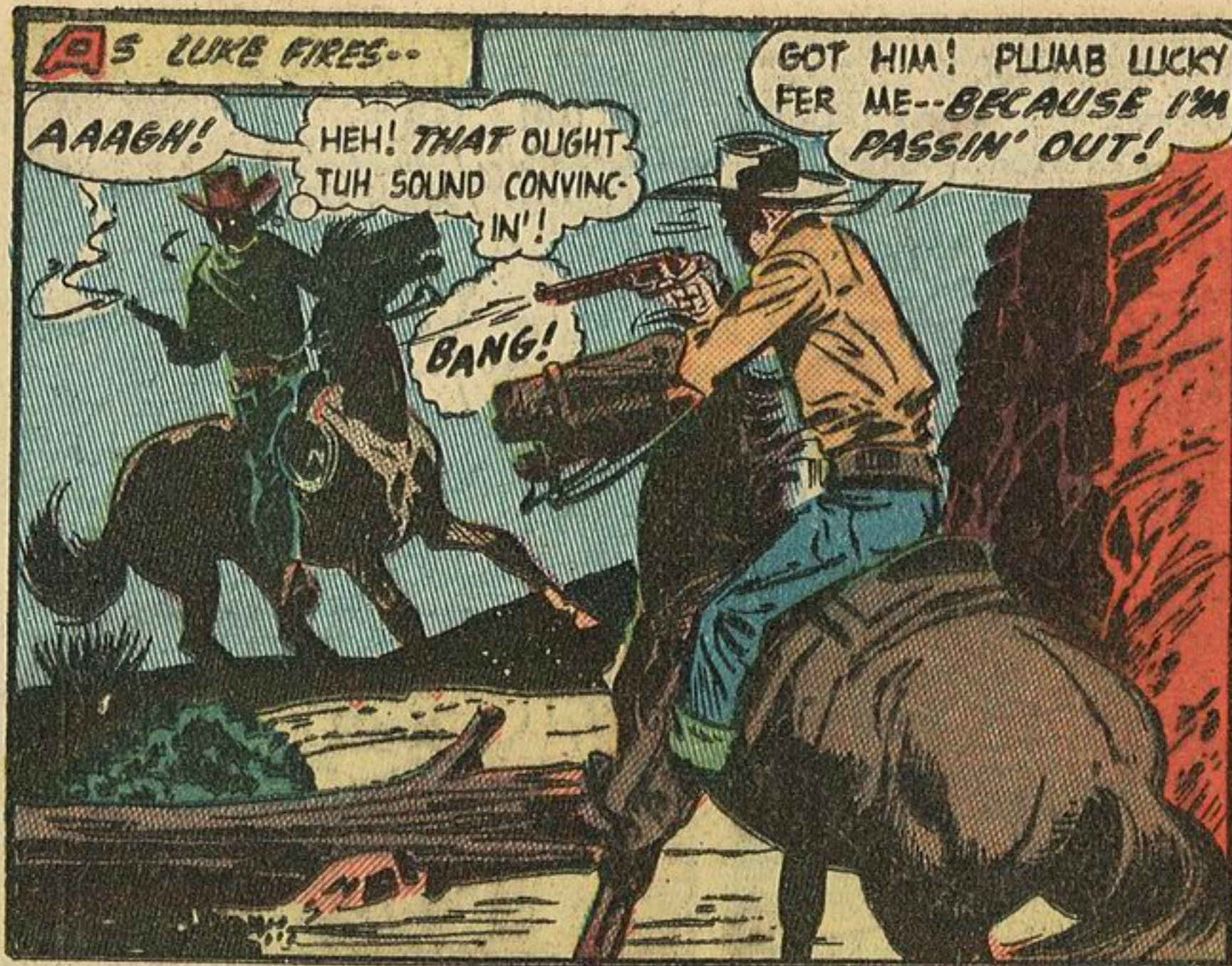
YEP--AN' *THAT'S* WHAT MAKES ME THINK SOMETHIN'S BREWIN'! WAL-- I'LL TAG ALONG WHILE YUH HAVE YORE USUAL CUP O' COFFEE AT THE CAFÉ, LUKE!



I'LL POUR OUT MOST O' THIS BREW --AN' LEAVE JEST ENOUGH FER ONE CUP! THAT WAY--THAR WON'T BE ANYONE *ELSE* DRINKIN' THE STUFF I AIM TUH GIT INSIDE O' LUKE HANLEY!







AS LUKE FIRES--

AAAGH!

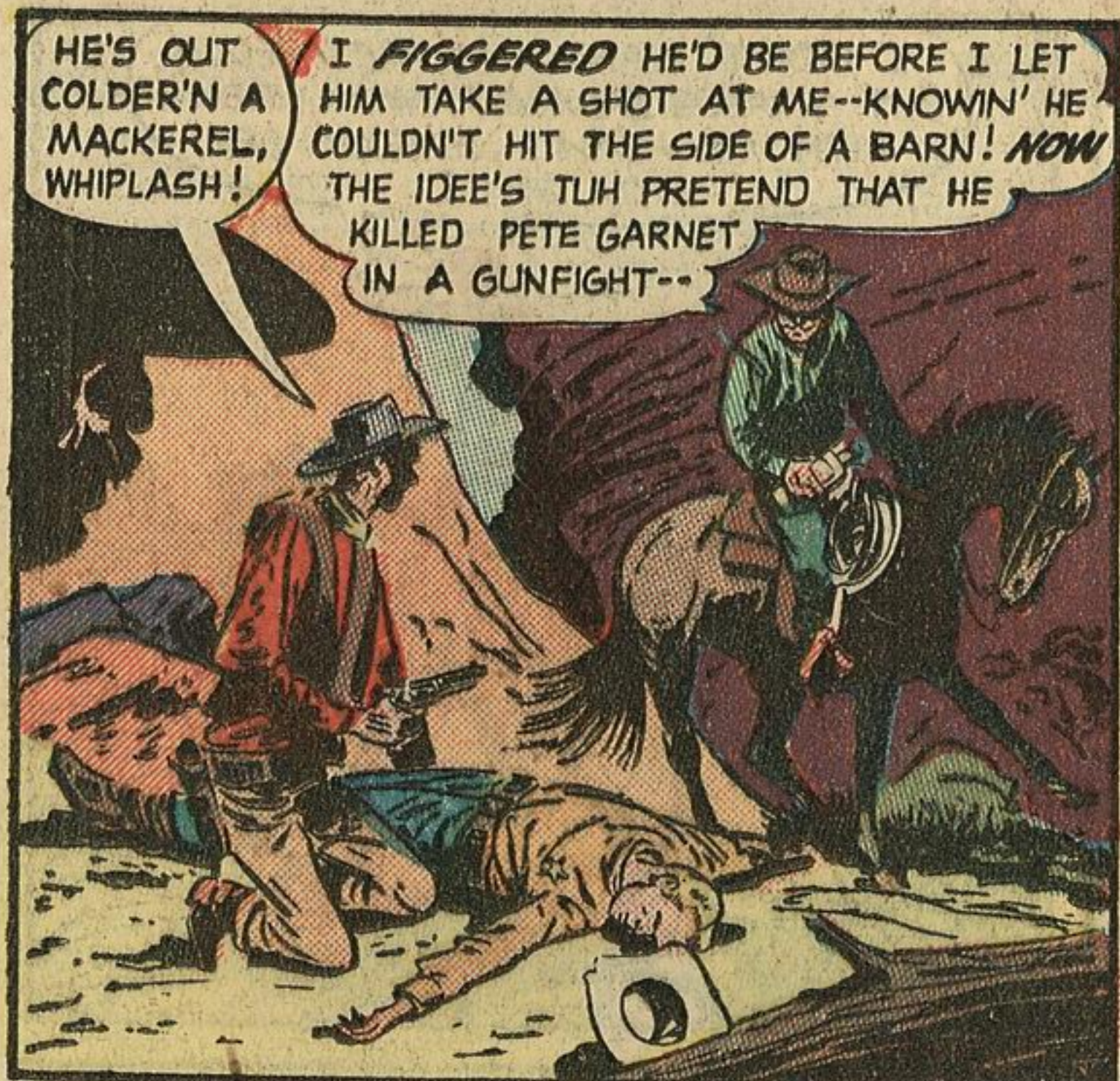
HEH! THAT OUGHT TUH SOUND CONVINC-IN!

BANG!

GOT HIM! PLUMB LUCKY FER ME--BECAUSE I'M PASSIN' OUT!



CRASH!



HE'S OUT COLDER'N A MACKEREL, WHIPLASH!

I FIGGERED HE'D BE BEFORE I LET HIM TAKE A SHOT AT ME--KNOWIN' HE COULDN'T HIT THE SIDE OF A BARN! NOW THE IDEE'S TUH PRETEND THAT HE KILLED PETE GARNET IN A GUNFIGHT--



--AN' THAT HE WAS BLIND DRUNK WHEN IT HAPPENED!



LUKE HANLEY'S SURE GOING TUH GIT A SURPRISE WHEN HE COMES TO--AN' FINDS PETE GARNET'S BODY STRETCHED OUT BESIDE HIM!

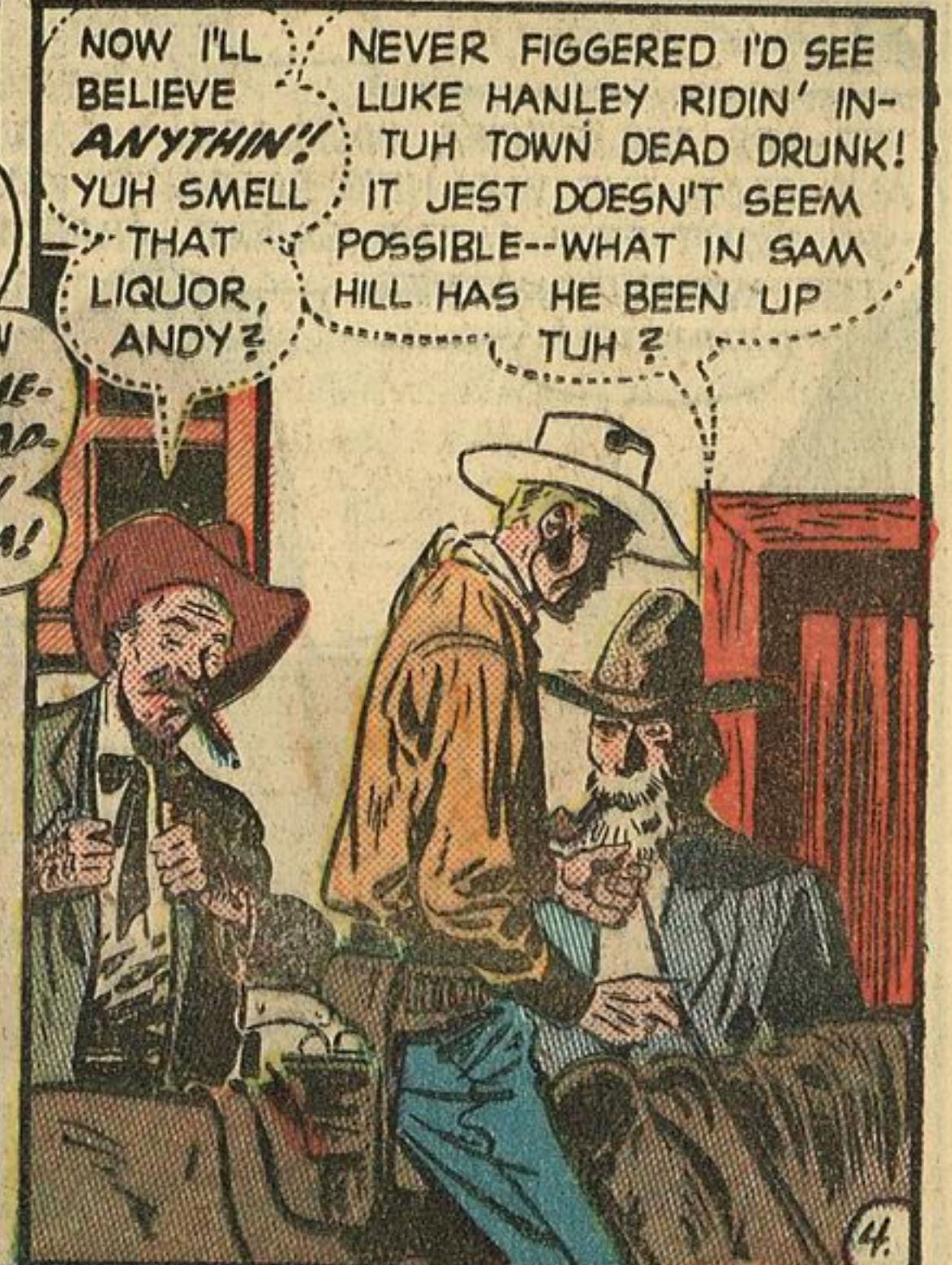
WE'LL RIDE INTUH TOWN TOMORROW TUH SEE HOW THIS PANS OUT--AN' I WON'T BE SURPRISED IF WE GIT THAR JEST IN TIME TUH SEE A LYNCHIN'!



EARLY NEXT DAY--

OL' PETE GARNET NEVER STAYED AWAY FROM HIS RANCH THIS LONG, BELLE! SHORE WISH LUKE WAS HERE --SO'S WE COULD GIT UP A POSSE AN' SEARCH THE RANGE!

CRIMPIN' COYOTES! THAR'S LUKE NOW --AN' SOME-THIN'S HAD-PENED TUH HIM!



NOW I'LL BELIEVE ANYTHIN'! YUH SMELL THAT LIQUOR, ANDY?

NEVER FIGGERED I'D SEE LUKE HANLEY RIDIN' IN-TUH TOWN DEAD DRUNK! IT JEST DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE--WHAT IN SAM HILL HAS HE BEEN UP TUH?



IT'S SHORE SETTIN' A MIGHTY PORE EXAMPLE, BELLE! HE MUST'VE BEEN DRINKIN' FER HOURS TUH GIT HIMSELF IN THIS SHAPE!

THAT'S YORE OPINION! BUT WHEN YUH'RE READY TUH GIT AROUND TUH **FACTS--LUKE HANLEY NEVER TOOK A DRINK IN HIS LIFE!**



BELLE--SEND A WAGON OUT TUH SOUTH FORK--TUH PICK UP WHAT'S LEFT O' PETE GARNET! I DIDN'T SAVVY IT WAS **HIM** WHEN HE OPENED FIRE--EVERYTHIN' BLACKED OUT JEST AS I SLAPPED LEATHER--BUT HE WAS LYIN' THAR **DEAD** WHEN I CAME TUH MUH SENSES AT DAWN!



GOSH A-MIGHTY, LUKE--I **KNOW** YUH'D NEVER PLUG ANYONE EXCEPT IN SELF DEFENSE--BUT WHY WOULD PETE GARNET COME GUNNIN' FER **YUH?** AN' HOW'D THAT WHISKY GIT ALL OVER YORE CLOTHES?

I'VE TOLD YUH EVERYTHIN' I KNOW, GAL! BUT I'M NOT ASKIN' ANYONE TUH BELIEVE MUH STORY--LEAST OF ALL **YUH!** JEST KEEP YORE CHIN UP--BECAUSE UNTIL THEY GIT AROUND TUH NAMIN' A NEW SHERIFF--**YUN'RE THE LAW!**



BELLE, IT'S ALMOST LIKE LUKE HANLEY'S MUH OWN SON--I'VE KNOWN HIM THAT LONG! BUT YUH AN' ME AN' THE REST OF US CAN'T LET PERSONAL FEELIN'S GO AGAINST **EVIDENCE!** YUH'VE GOT TUH BE BIG ENOUGH TUH FACE IT, GAL--**AN' DO YORE DUTY!**

I--I GIT WHAT YUH'RE DRIVIN' AT, JIM!



LUKE HANLEY, YUH'RE UNDER ARREST--**ON SUSPICION O' MURDER!**



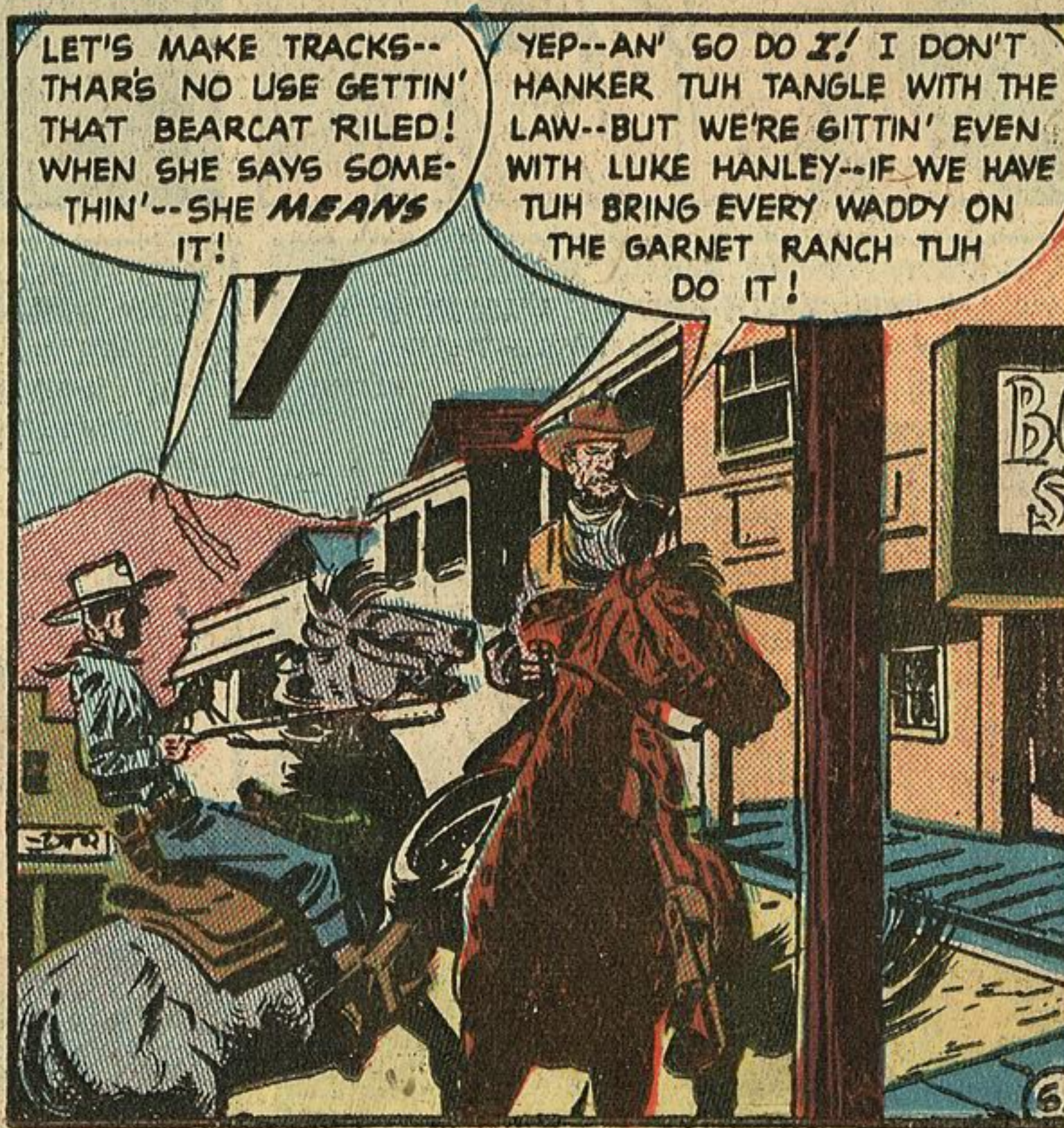
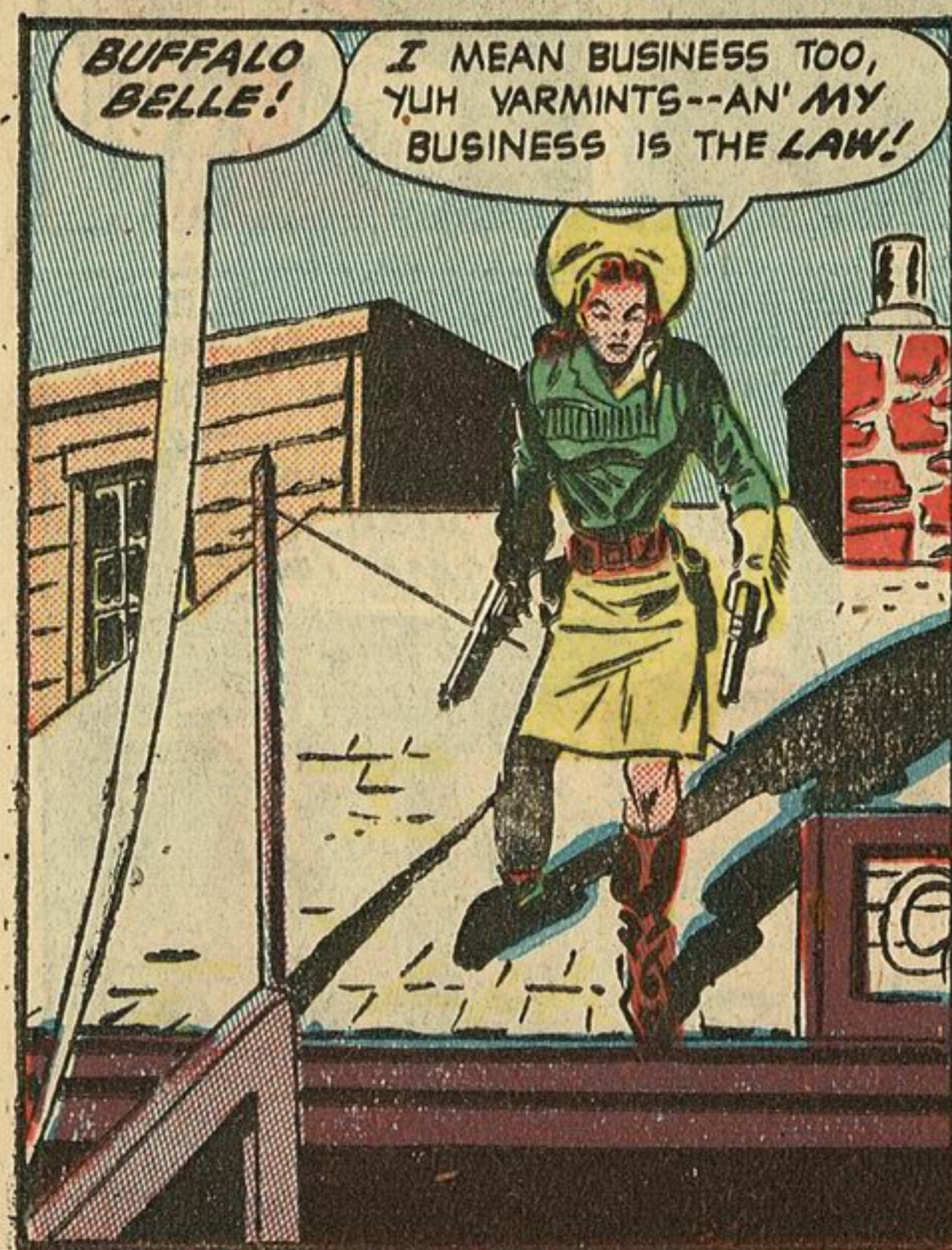
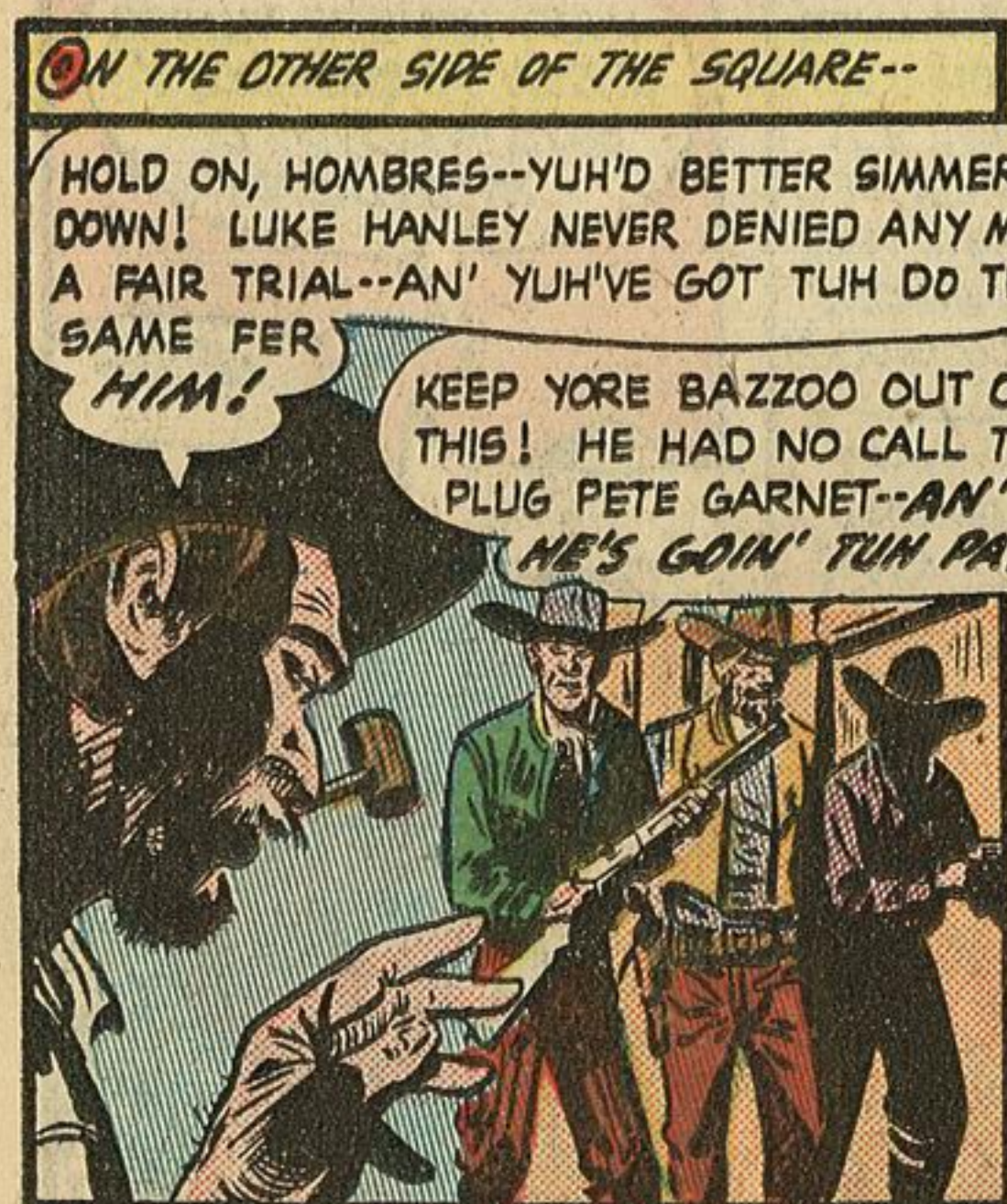
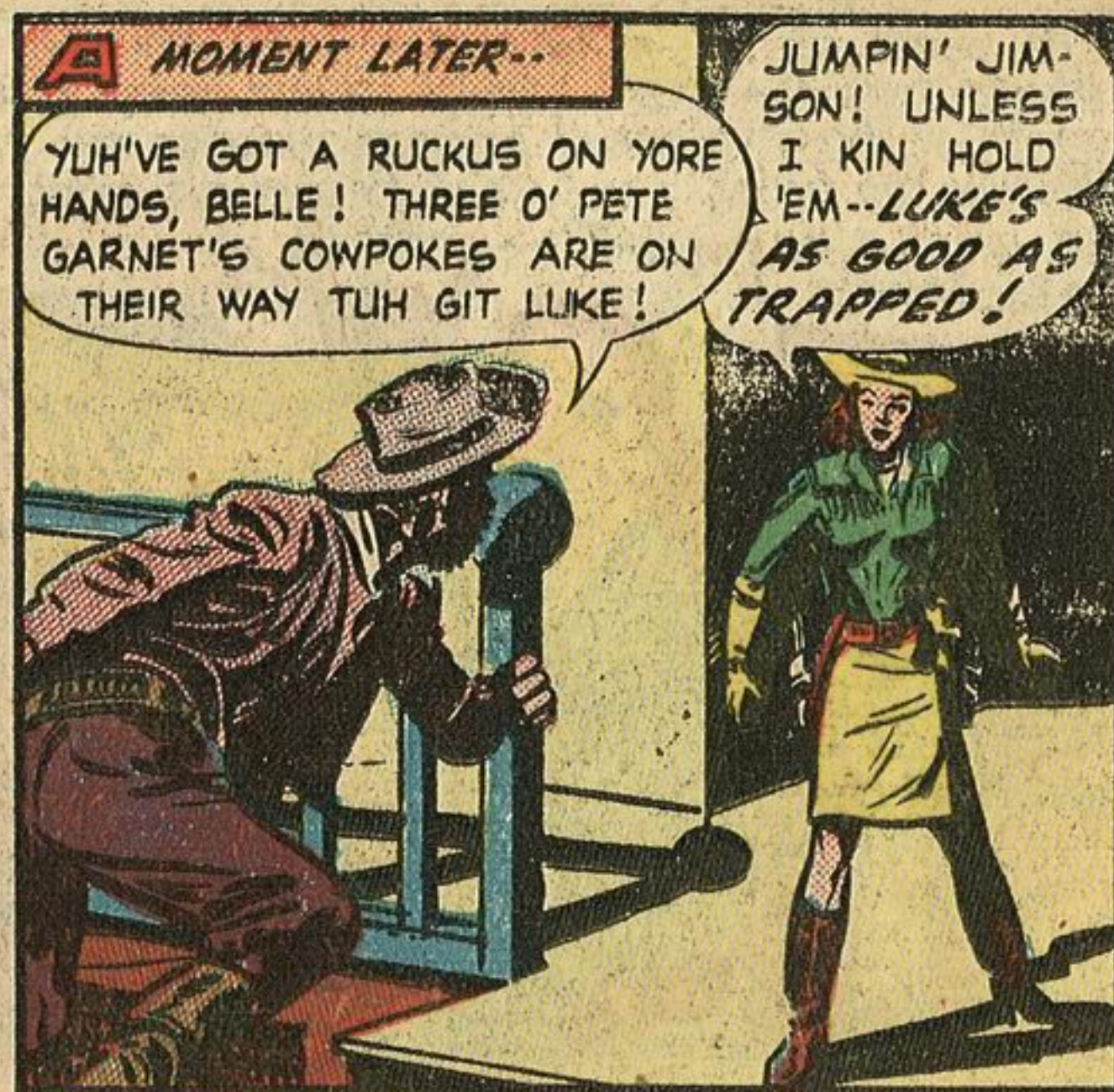
I KNOW YUH'RE PLUMB BUSTED UP ABOUT THIS, BELLE--BUT IF IT'LL HELP ANY--I GIVE YUH MUH WORD THAR'S NO HARD FEELIN'S!

SLAM!



ARE YUH LOCO, YUH BIG GALOOT--REALLY THINKIN' I'D HOLD **YUH** FER MURDER--WHEN YUH'RE JEST ABOUT THE ONLY HOMBRE IN THE CHEROKEE STRIP WHO'S MAN ENOUGH TUH WEAR A BADGE?

HOPPIN' HORNED TOADS, BELLE--YUH MEAN YUH'RE **BACKIN' ME UP?**





WE'RE COMIN' BACK, BELLE--
AN' DON'T FORGIT--PETE
GARNET HAD A HEAP
O' FRIENDS!

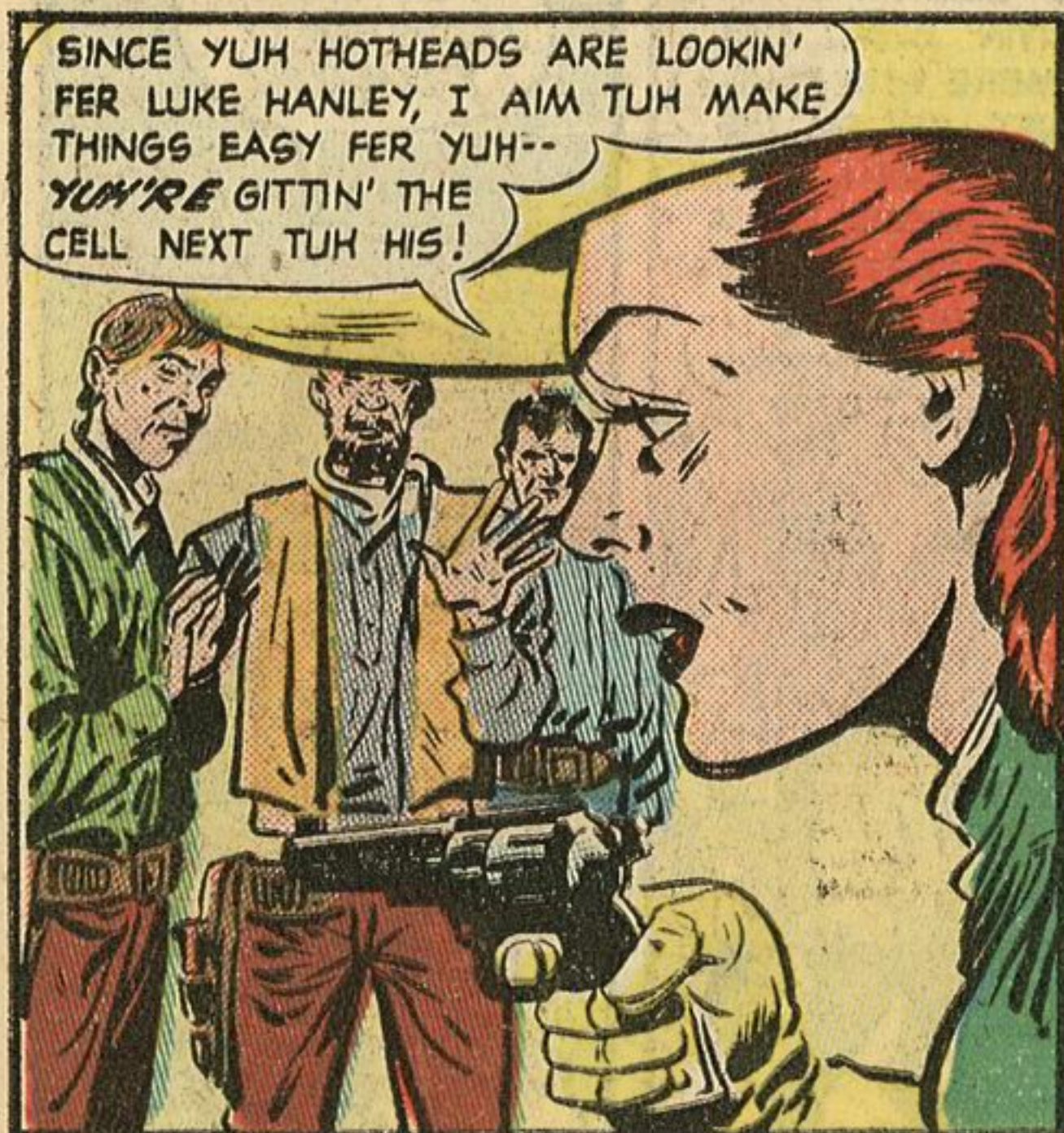
I'M BE-
GINNIN'
TUH
THINK LUKE
HANLEY'S GOT
JEST **ONE**
FRIEND--



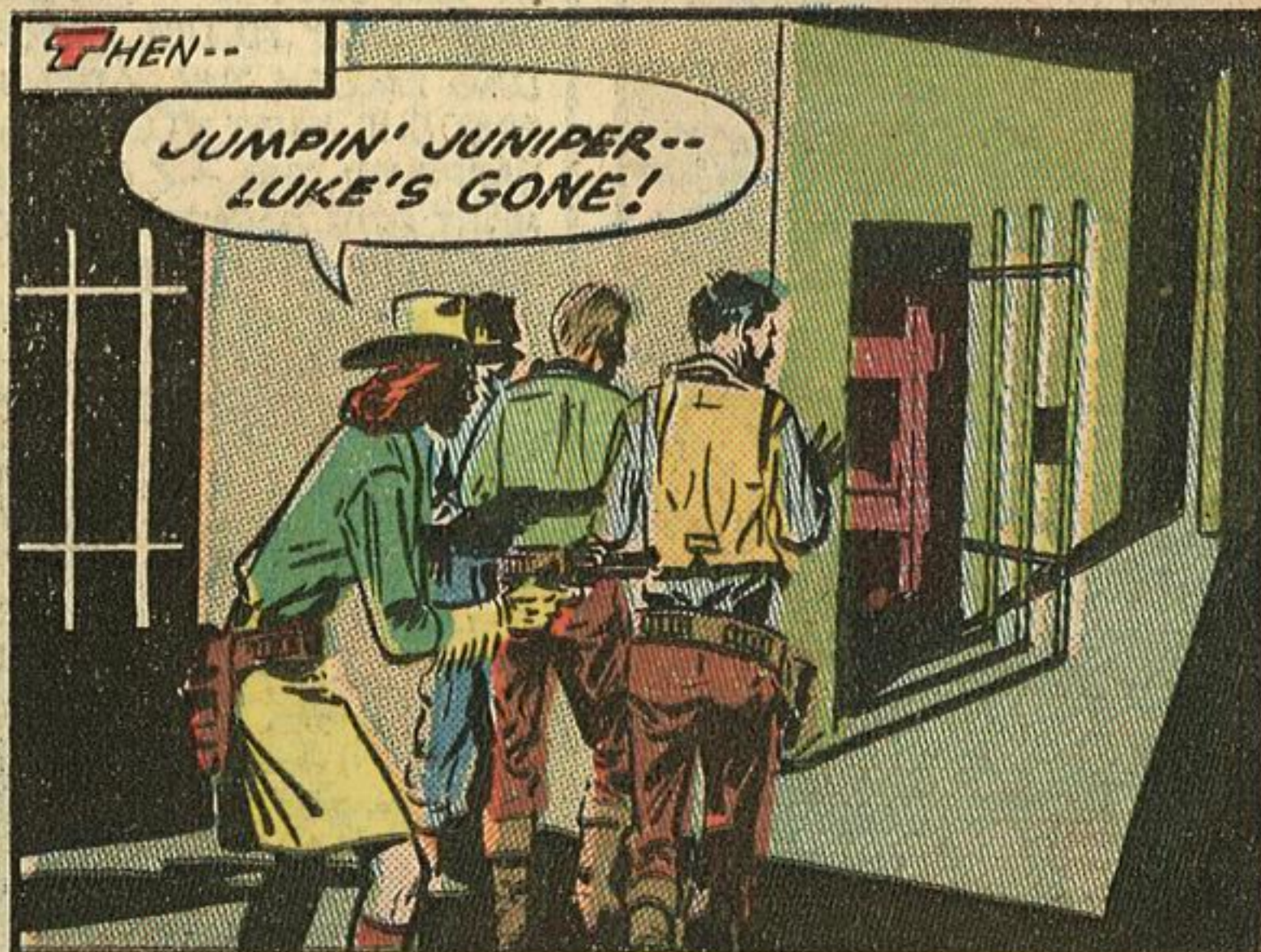
--BUT AS LONG
AS IT'S **ME**--



--HE WON'T HAVE NOTHIN'
TUH WORRY ABOUT!



SINCE YUH HOTHEADS ARE LOOKIN'
FER LUKE HANLEY, I AIM TUH MAKE
THINGS EASY FER YUH--
YUH'RE GITTIN' THE
CELL NEXT TUH HIS!



THEN--

JUMPIN' JUNIPER--
LUKE'S GONE!



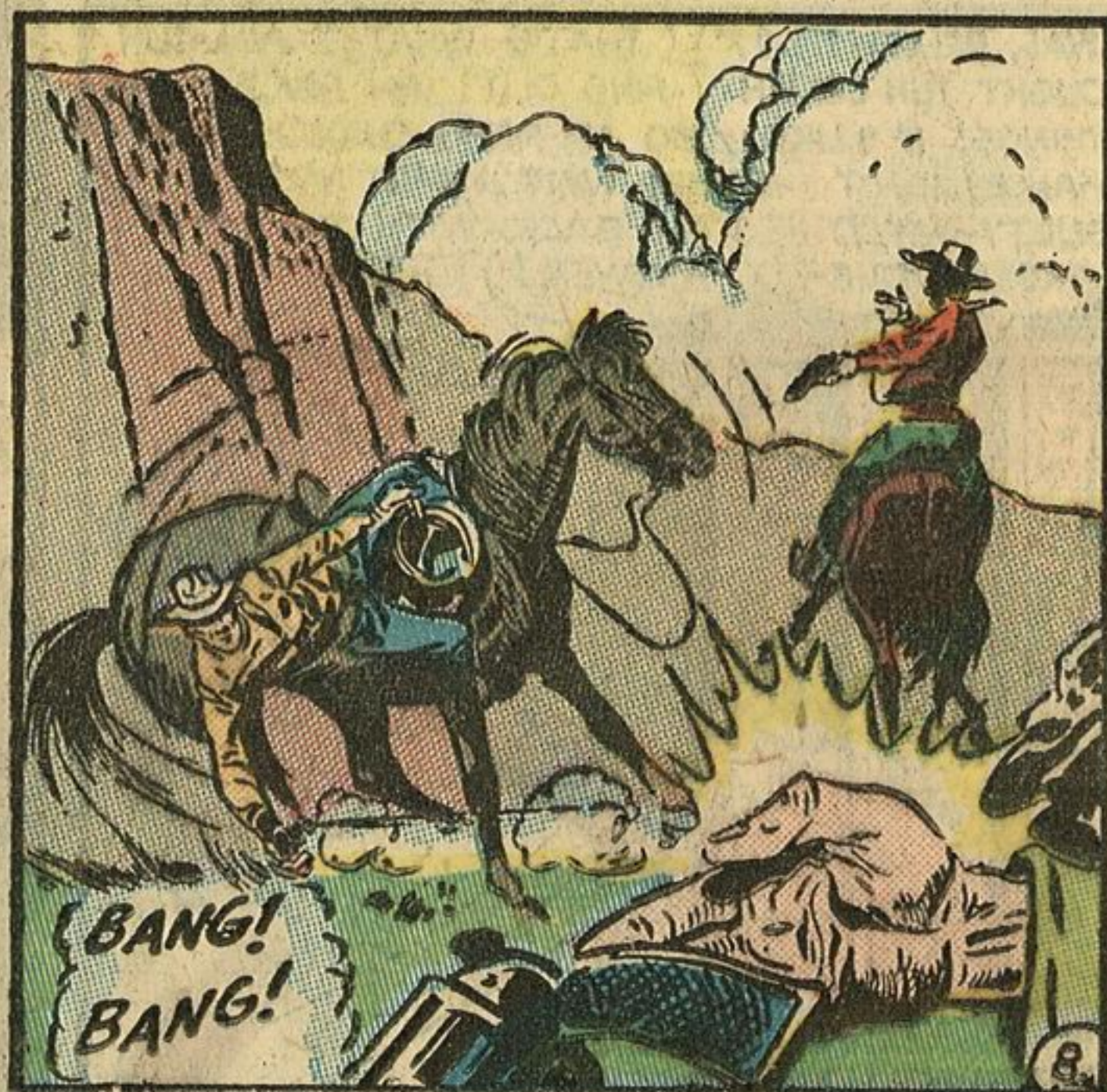
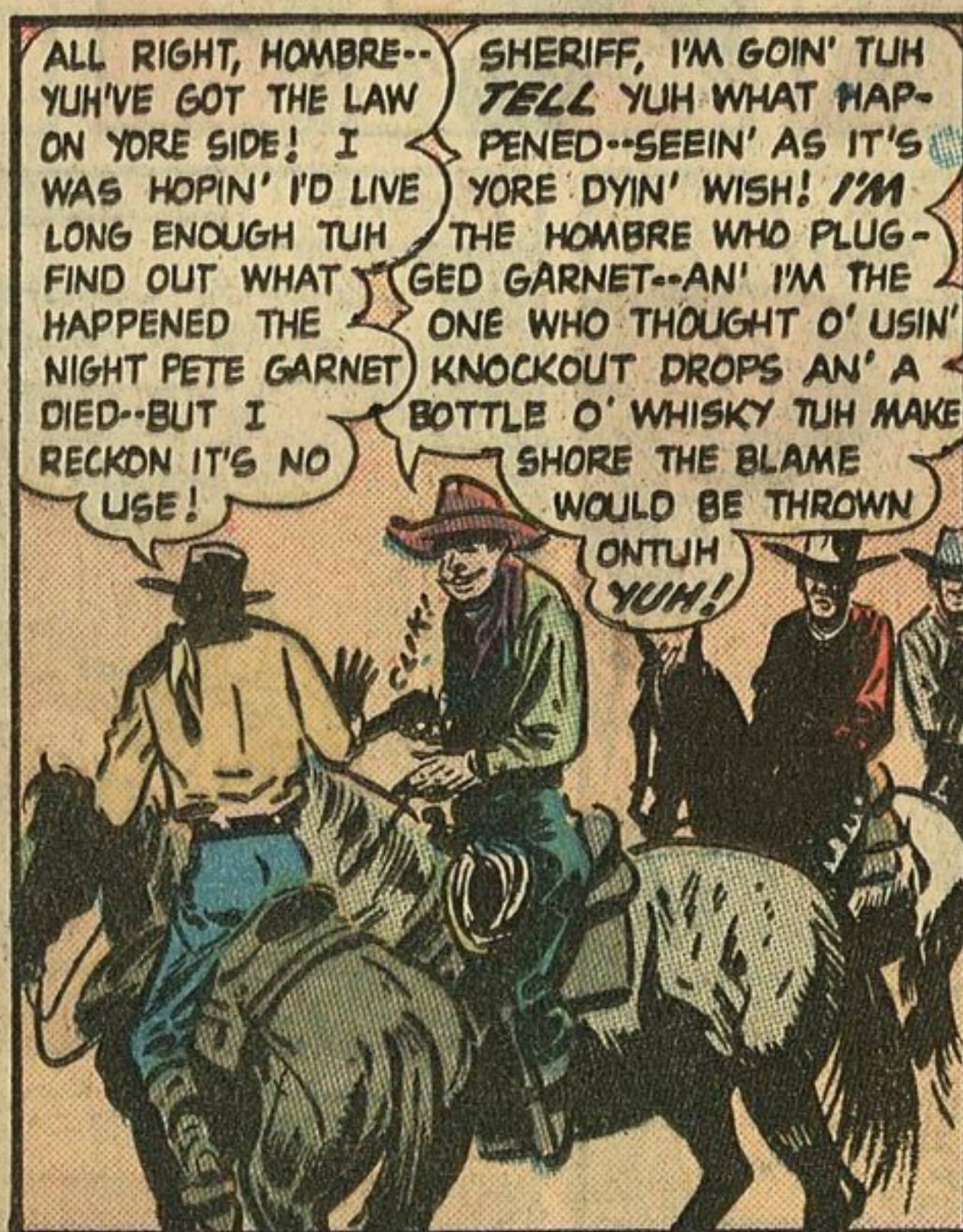
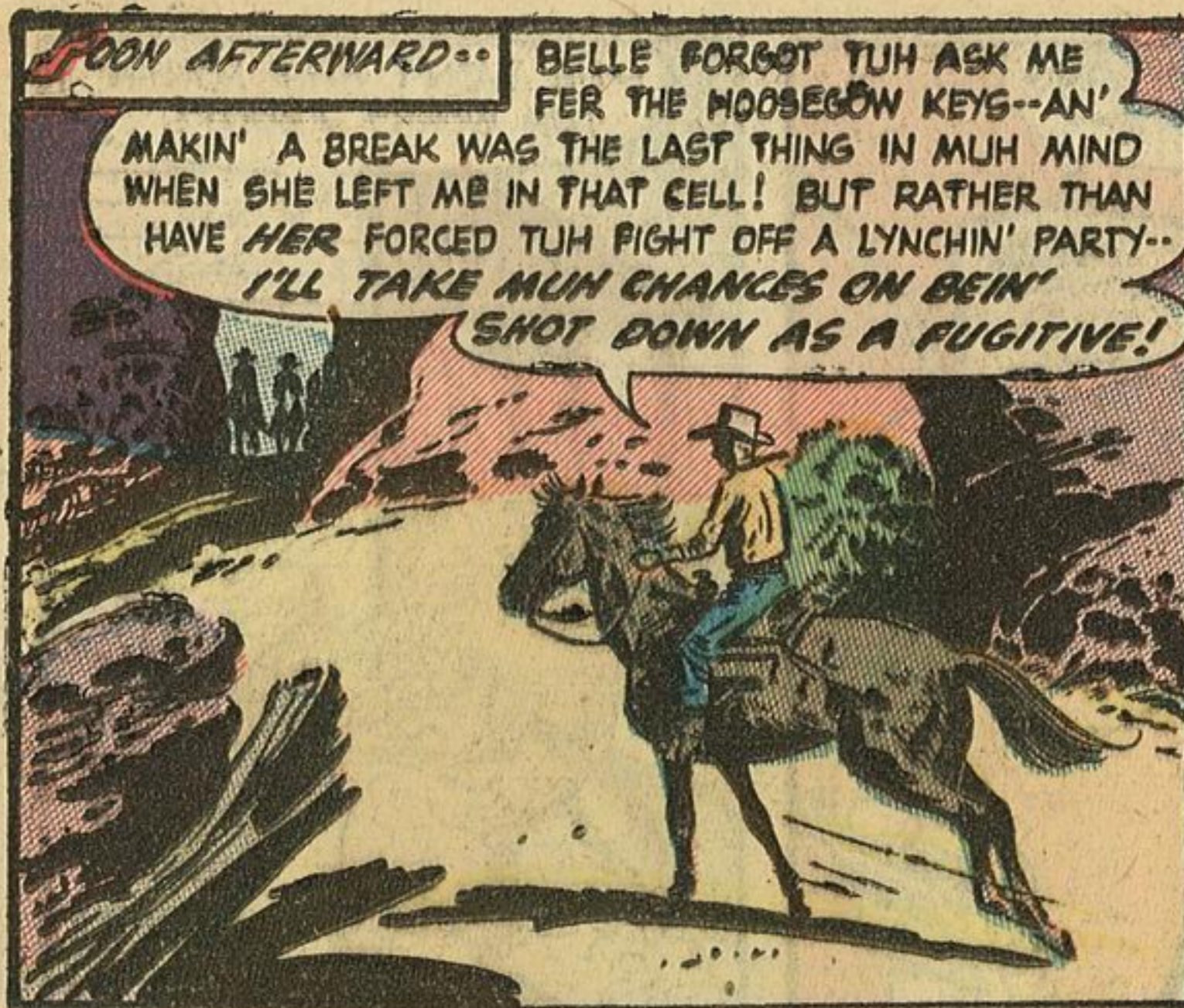
WAL, BELLE--**THAT**
OUGHT TUH CLINCH
THINGS! IF LUKE
HANLEY ISN'T
GUILTY--WHY'D HE
SKEEDADDLE?

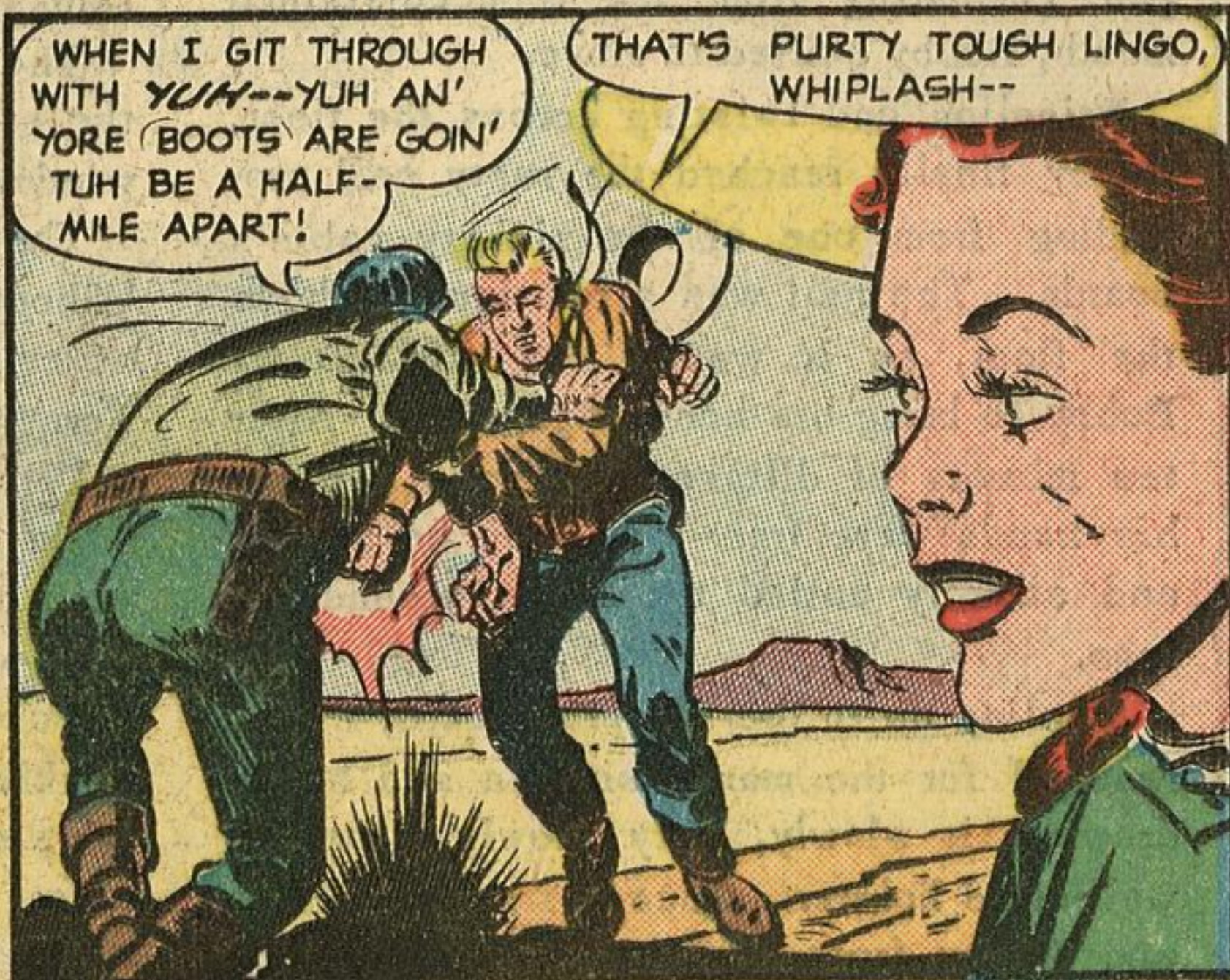
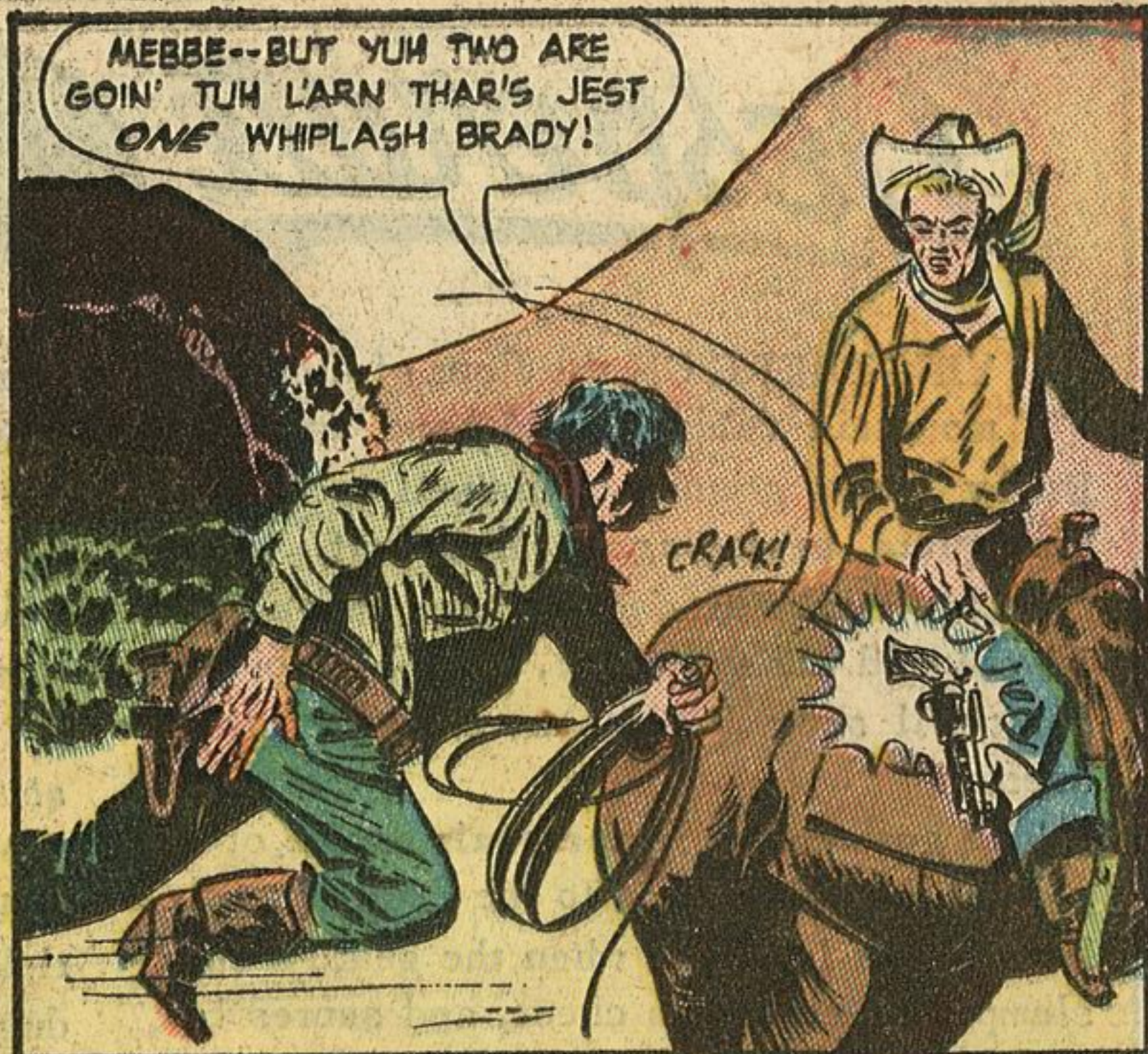
THAT'S WHAT I AIM TUH
FIND OUT! AN' SINCE YUH'RE
SO ALL-FIRED CURIOUS--YUH
KIN WAIT **HERE** UNTIL I
GIT BACK WITH THE
ANSWER!



MINUTES LATER--

THAR'S LUKE--AN' HE'S
GOT A GOOD START ON ME!
MEBBE I KIN
HEAD HIM OFF BY
MAKIN' FER
PANTHER
NOTCH!





Desperate GAMBLE

LYING THERE ON the floor of the crude mountain cabin, bound hand and foot, Bobby Turner grinned to himself as he saw his guard beginning to doze off. "He probably thinks he doesn't have to watch a 14-year-old kid too close," Bobby thought. "But I'll show 'im---as soon as he starts snorin'!"

The gunman sat in the chair on the other side of the cabin, next to the door, his rifle lying in his lap---and when the guard's chin slumped down on his chest, and snores began emanating from the tobacco-stained mouth, Bobby started to move.

Wriggling and twisting across the floor, Bobby finally reached the rusty nail protruding from one of the rickety cabin's boards. The nail was a few inches above the floor, so it wasn't too difficult for Bobby to bring his bonds against it. After ten minutes of diligent, cautious sawing, his hands were free---and then he swiftly and silently untied the ropes around his legs.

Stealing up to the sleeping guard, Bobby reached for the man's six-gun and began drawing it slowly, very slowly, from its well-oiled holster. Once the guard stirred, and Bobby froze, holding his breath, his heart racing with fear. But the snores didn't stop, and finally the revolver was free of the holster.

CRACK!

The gunman slumped to the floor without a sound as the gunbutt came smashing down on his skull. Then Bobby was stealing quietly out of the door, looking towards the lighted window of the other cabin twenty yards away, where the other three gangmen who had kidnaped him were playing cards and drinking. They apparently hadn't heard a thing, and Bobby ran in a half-crouch to the horses tethered to the trees at the edge of the mountain clearing.

There were four horses, and one of them was the magnificent white stallion that be-

longed to Slade McCoy, the leader of the gang. Bobby knew that he could handle any of the other three horses more easily, but he also knew how proud McCoy was of that stallion---and the thought crossed the boy's mind that perhaps the gang leader wouldn't let his men fire at the stallion when the sound of hooves gave the escape away.

Murmuring softly to the white stallion, Bobby mounted him bareback---he couldn't risk hunting for McCoy's saddle---and then dug his heels savagely into the animal's flanks.

The tattoo of flying hooves was heard in the cabin, and Spade McCoy sprang to the window. "Wha---it's the kid---on my hoss!"

The other two men drew their guns. "Shoot 'im down," one cried, "or we'll never git the ransom money from old banker Turner!"

"Hold yore fire!" shouted McCoy. "Yuh might hit Whitey---an' I'll *kill* the man who even wings muh hoss! The kid can't git away---he's headin' up Dead End Canyon---I reckon he doesn't know this part o' the Rockies! After 'im---on the other hosses!"

Twenty minutes later, Bobby reined the white stallion up sharply as he saw the sheer cliff-walls dead ahead. Behind him sounded the clatter of hooves on the rocky ground, but Bobby didn't have any choice---he couldn't go forward, so he *had* to go back! Wheeling the stallion around, Bobby made his desperate decision---and spurred the horse into a gallop straight at the on-rushing gangmen. The outlaws halted in consternation as they saw the white juggernaut hurtling toward them---and before McCoy could countermand his order about not shooting at the horse, their own horses reared up in fear, throwing the gangmen beneath the flashing, slashing white hooves that trampled them into insensibility.

Bobby's desperate gamble had paid off---and he'd gained a magnificent white stallion in the bargain!

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GOLD TOWN & GHOST TOWN

TYPICAL OF THE MANY FABULOUS GOLD STRIKES IN THE OLD WEST WAS THE ONE MADE IN 1859 BY A HUNTER, BUCKSKIN JOE HARRIS, NEAR THE SOURCE OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER IN THE MOSQUITO RANGE OF COLORADO!



CERTAIN OF HAVING WOUNDED THE DEER, THE PUZZLED HUNTER WENT TO SEARCH FOR TRACES OF BLOOD ON THE GROUND WHERE THE ANIMAL HAD STOOD...

YUP, THAR'S DROPS O' BLOOD... AN'-- AN' SOMETHIN' ELSE!



GOLD-- NUGGETS O' PURE GOLD-- RIGHT ON THE SURFACE-- I--I'M RICH!



YES, BUCKSKIN JOE HAD STUMBLED ON A LODE AS RICH AS ANY EVER DISCOVERED-- A THICK GOLD DEPOSIT RIGHT AT THE VERY GRASS ROOTS! HARRIS WORKED IT LIKE A STONE QUARRY, AND GOLD POURED FROM HIS MINE IN SUCH QUANTITIES THAT HIS CABIN WAS FILLED WITH IT-- EVERYTHING IN SIGHT STUFFED WITH THE PURE YELLOW METAL, EVEN HIS OLD BOOTS!



ALMOST OVERNIGHT A TOWN NAMED "BUCKSKIN JOE" SPRANG UP NEAR THE SITE OF THE MINE, WITH 5,000 MINERS CROWDING ITS STREETS AND RIOTING THERE AT NIGHT! SOON THE GOLD TOWN HAD THREE LUXURIOUS DANCE HALLS, A THEATRE, A BANK, SEVERAL QUARTZ MILLS-- AND A LOOK OF PERMANENCY, AS IF THE TOWN WERE THERE TO STAY!

BUT "BUCKSKIN JOE" HAD NEVER BEEN MORE THAN A ONE-MINE TOWN, AND WHEN THE STREAM OF GOLD ABRUPTLY CEASED AND THE BOOM COLLAPSED COMPLETELY, THE TOWN DEPOPULATED ABOUT AS FAST AS IT HAD BEEN BUILT-- ALMOST OVERNIGHT! BUCKSKIN JOE HIMSELF, HAVING SQUANDERED ALL HIS MONEY, WAS FINALLY FORCED TO ABANDON HIS GHOST TOWN IN 1868-- AND DRIFTED AWAY PENNILESS, NEVER TO BE HEARD FROM AGAIN!

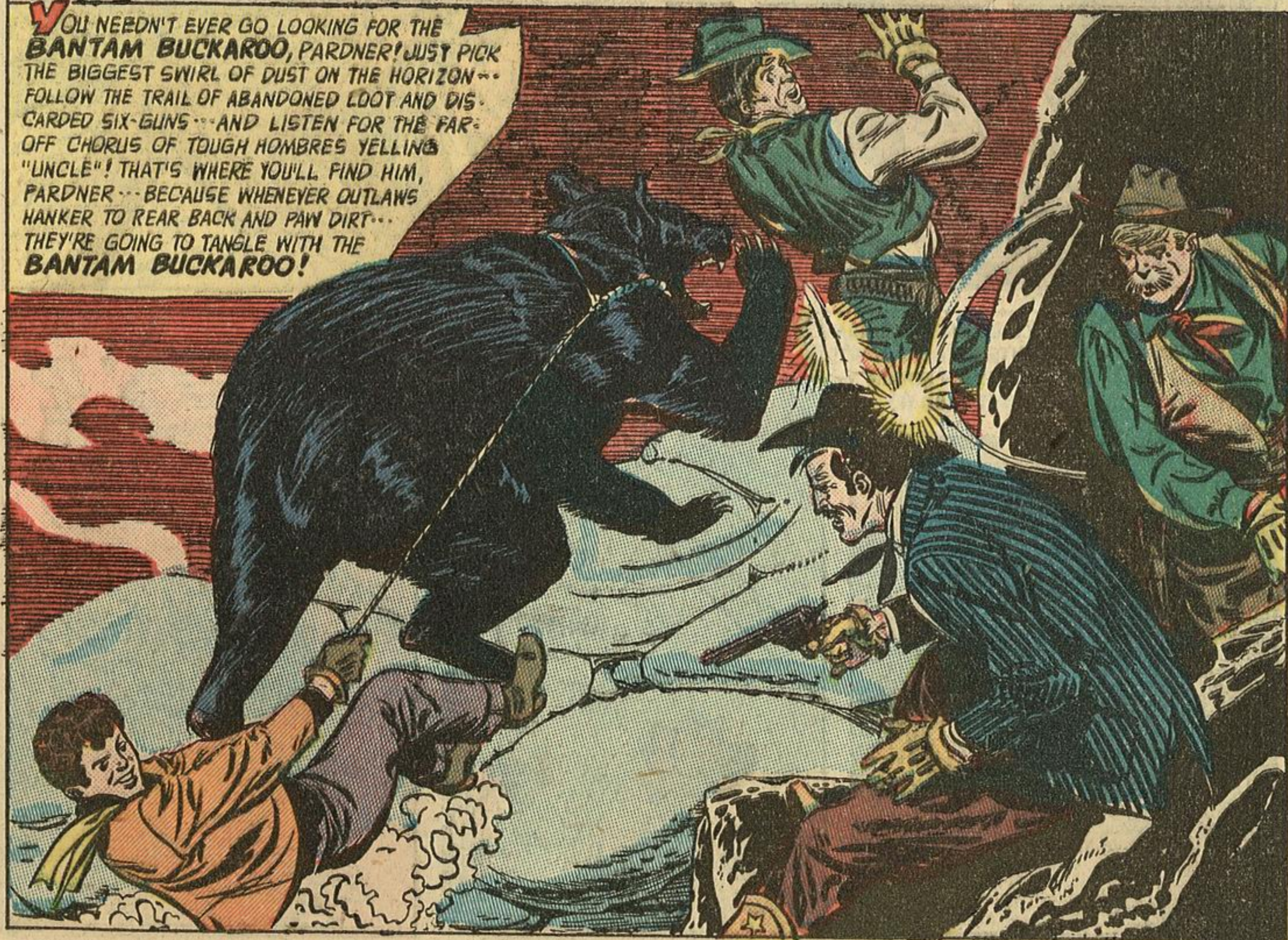
WELCOME TO BUCKSKIN JOE



The END

BANTAM BUCKAROO

YOU NEEDN'T EVER GO LOOKING FOR THE **BANTAM BUCKAROO**, PARDNER! JUST PICK THE BIGGEST SWIRL OF DUST ON THE HORIZON-- FOLLOW THE TRAIL OF ABANDONED LOOT AND DISCARDED SIX-GUNS-- AND LISTEN FOR THE FAR-OFF CHORUS OF TOUGH HOMBRES YELLING "UNCLE"! THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND HIM, PARDNER-- BECAUSE WHENEVER OUTLAWS HANKER TO REAR BACK AND PAW DIRT-- THEY'RE GOING TO TANGLE WITH THE **BANTAM BUCKAROO**!



IT ALL STARTED ONE QUIET AFTERNOON--AT THE HARNEY RANCH--

I SAW LOBO SNEAK INTOH THE BARN AN HOUR AGO--AN' THAR HASN'T BEEN A SIGN OF ACTIVITY **SINCE!** MAKES MUH FLESH CRAWL TUH THINK OF IT-- BUT WHEN THAT YOUNG SCAMP'S **QUIET**, IT'S A SHORE SIGN O' **TROUBLE!**



COME ON OUT O' THAR, LOBO! IF YUH'RE LOOKIN' FER SOMETHING TUH DO, YUH KIN RIDE TUH TOWN AN' GIT A HAIRCUT--YUH'RE GROWIN' SHAGGY AS A BEARSKIN!

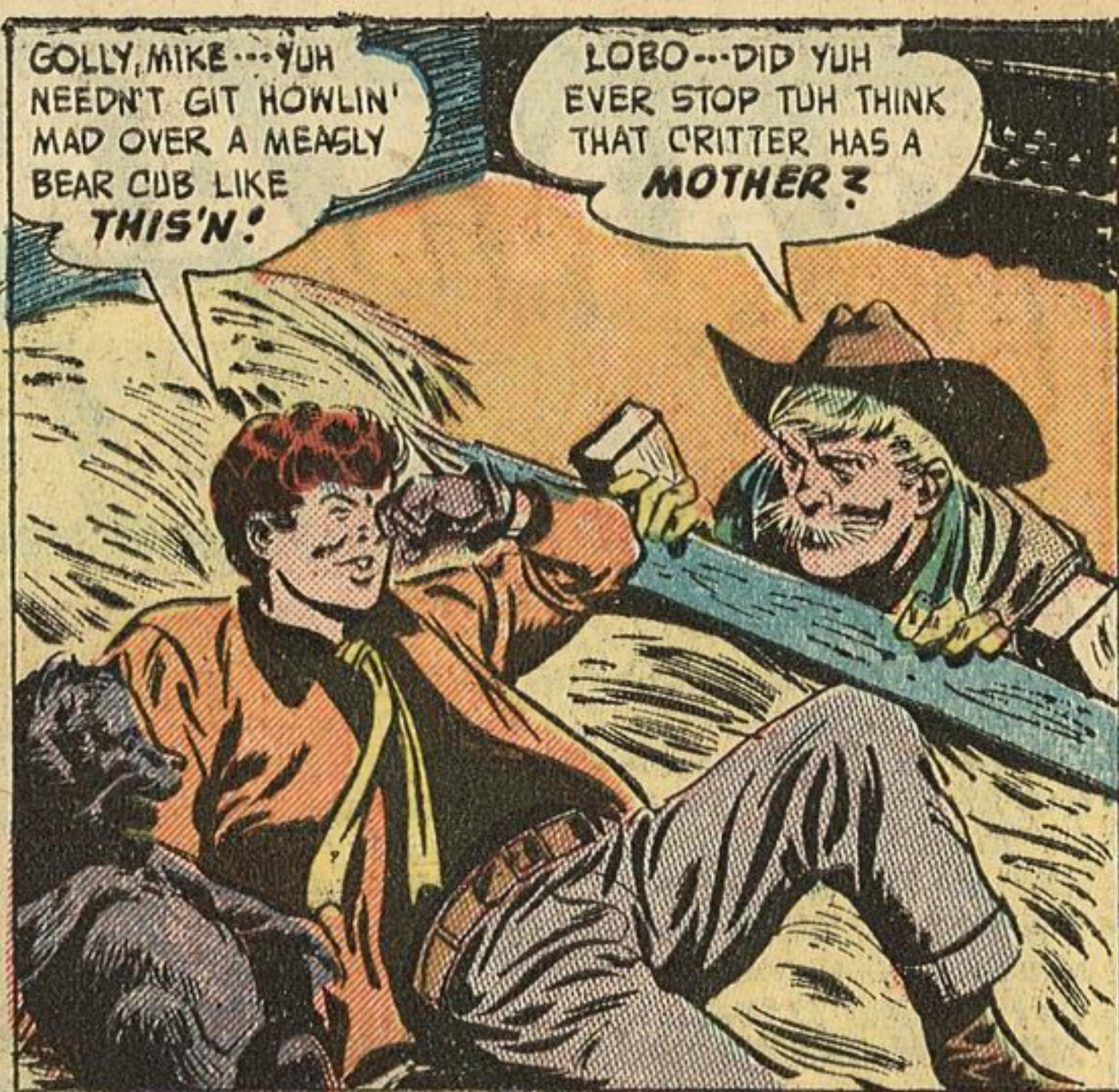


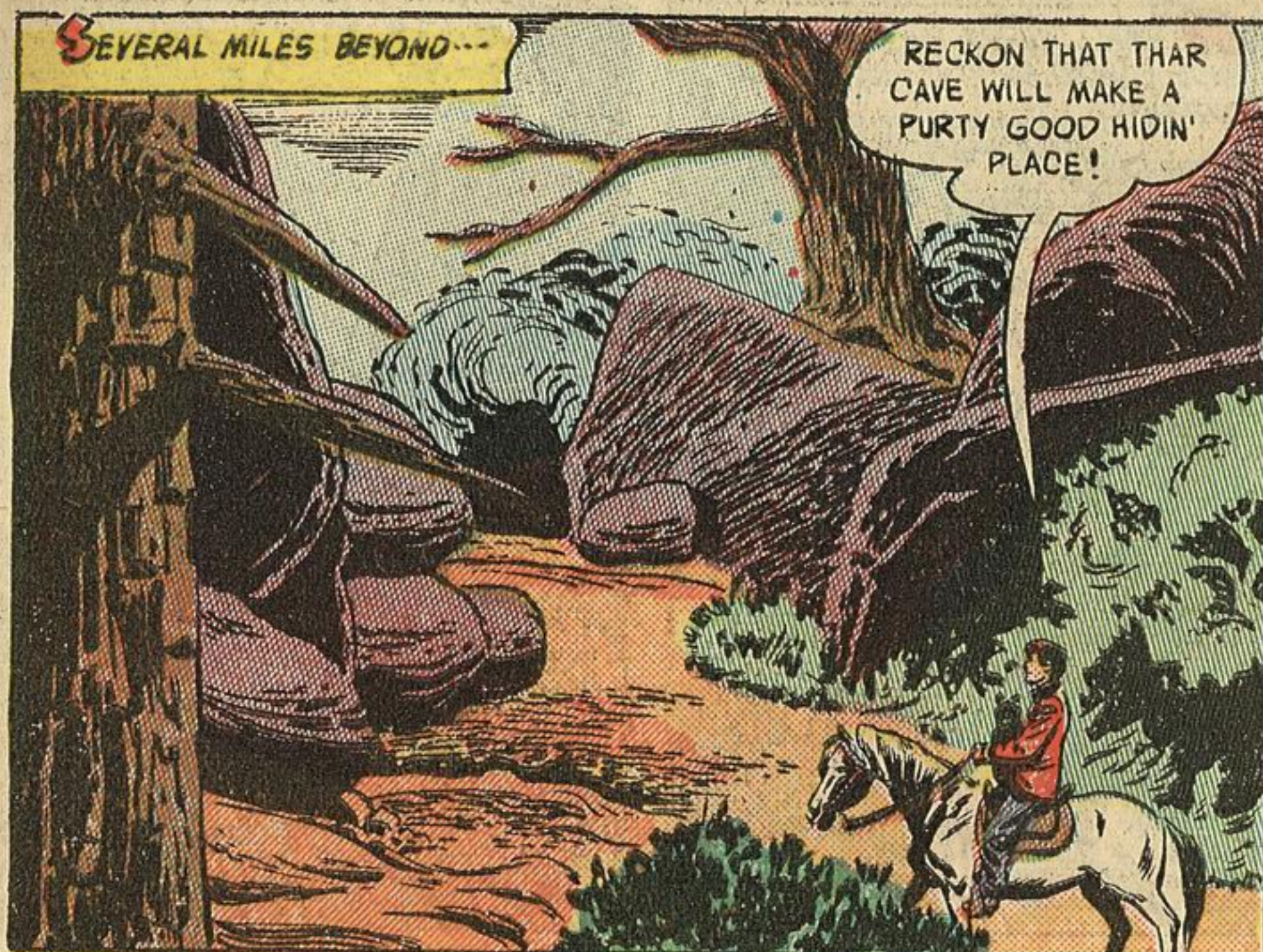
BEARSKIN!



HUH?

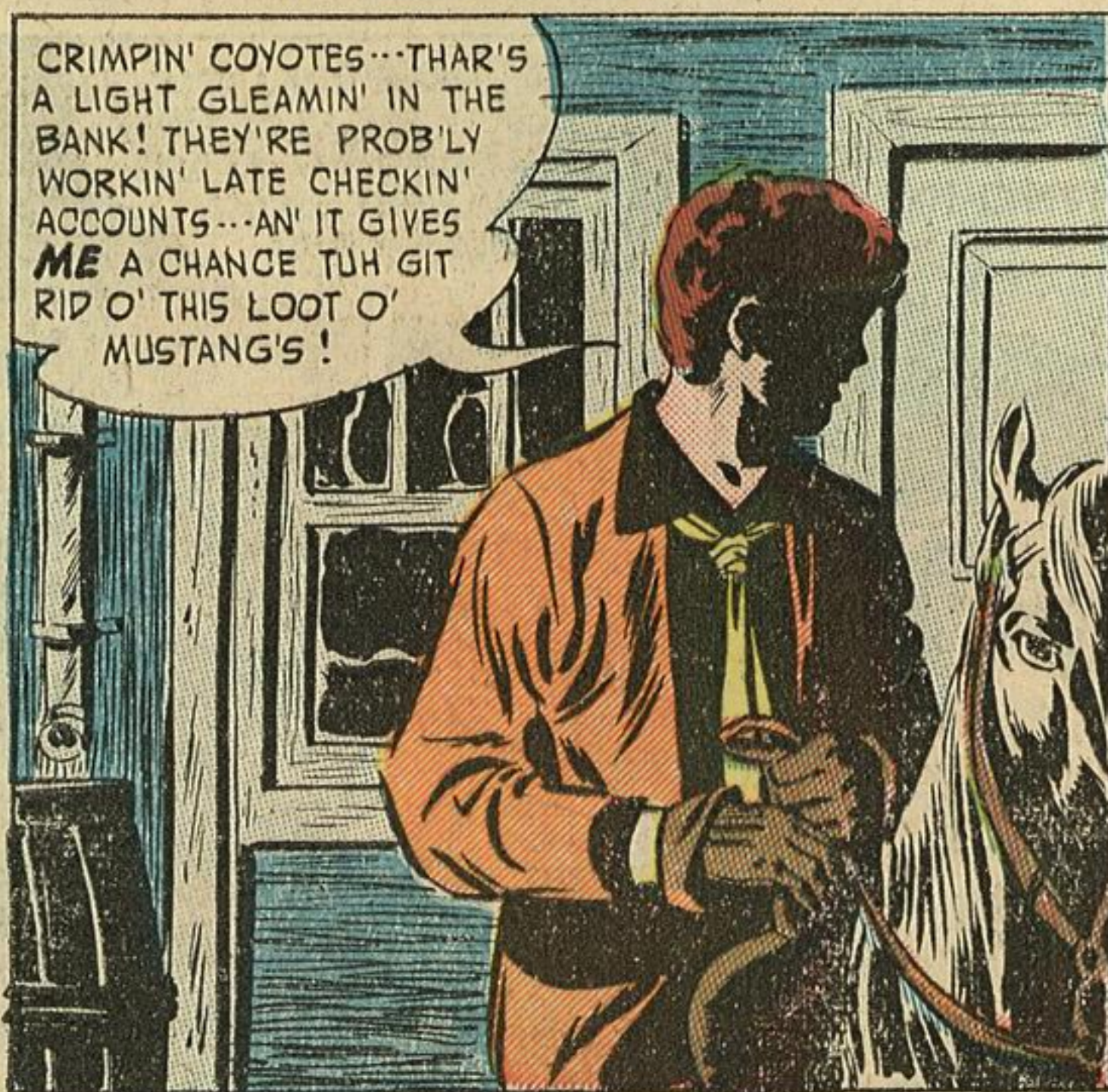


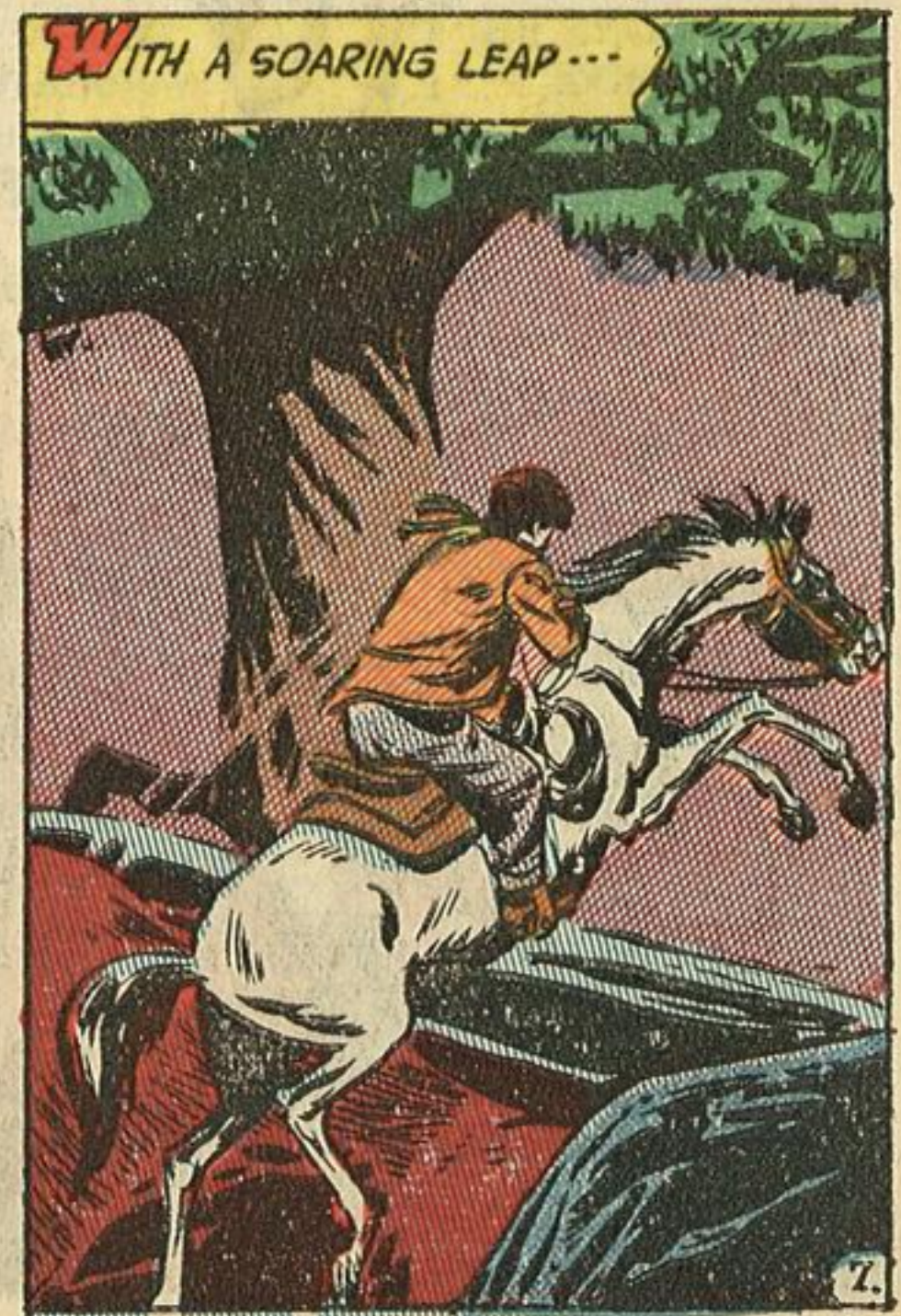
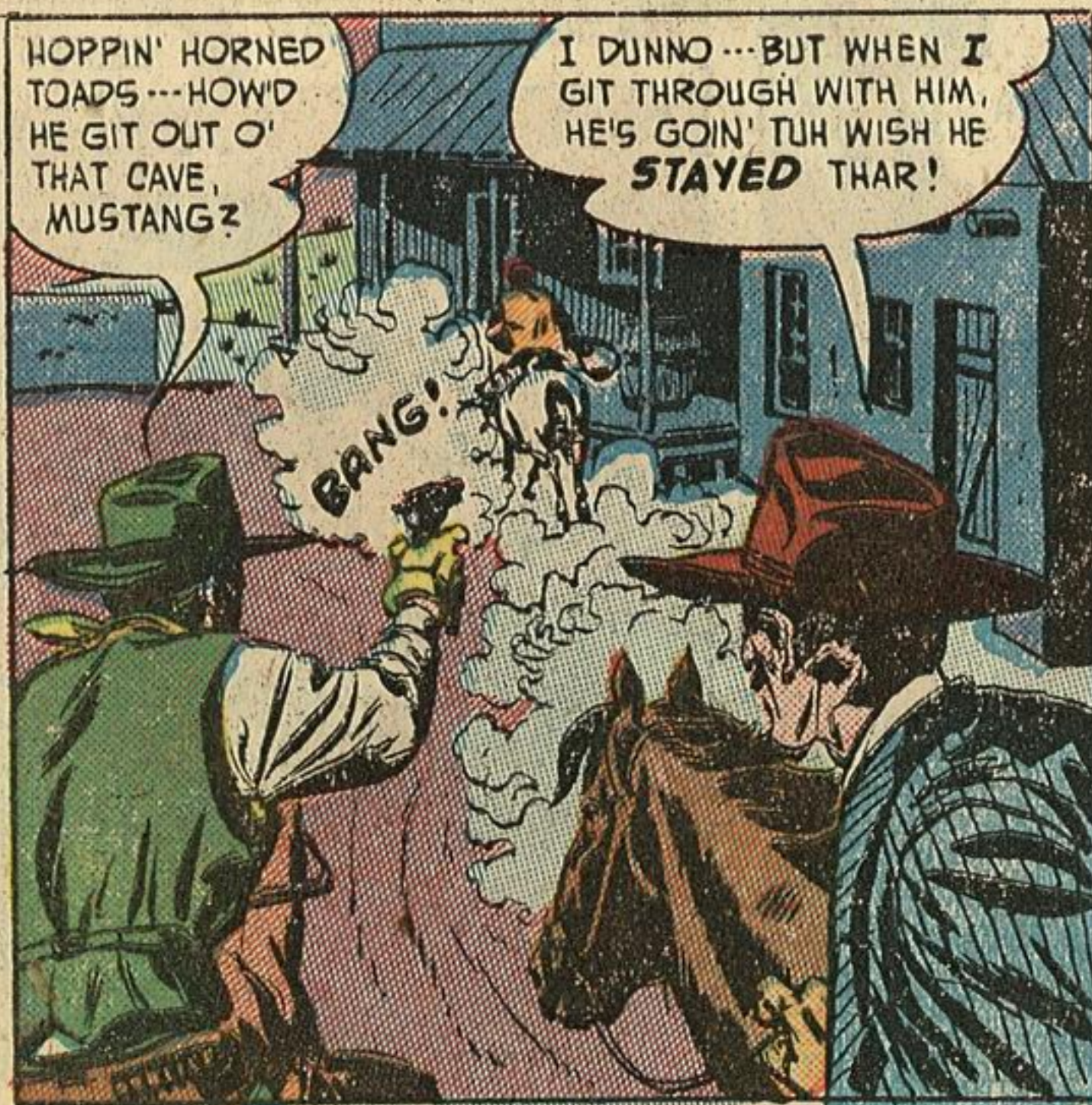














THAT KID MUST
BE LOCO, MUSTANG!
WHY'D HE HEAD
BACK **HERE?**

MEBBE HE
FIGGERED IT'D
BE THE LAST
PLACE WE'D
LOOK---BUT IT'S
HIS TOUGH LUCK
THEM HOOF PRINTS
LEAD STRAIGHT
INTUH THE
CAVE!



SOMETHIN'S
MOVIN'!
THAR HE IS,
MUSTANG!

NEVER MIND
PLUGGIN' HIM---
YET! I AIM TUH
GIVE THAT PESKY
RUNT A COUPLE
O' HOURS O'
MISERY---**PILE
ONTUH HIM!**



THE HOSSES!
SUFFERIN'
SASSAFRAS,
MUSTANG---
**THEY'VE
STAMPEDED!**

**THAT
GRIZZLY'S
CHARGIN' RIGHT
BEHIND US! WE
WON'T GIT TEN
YARDS!**

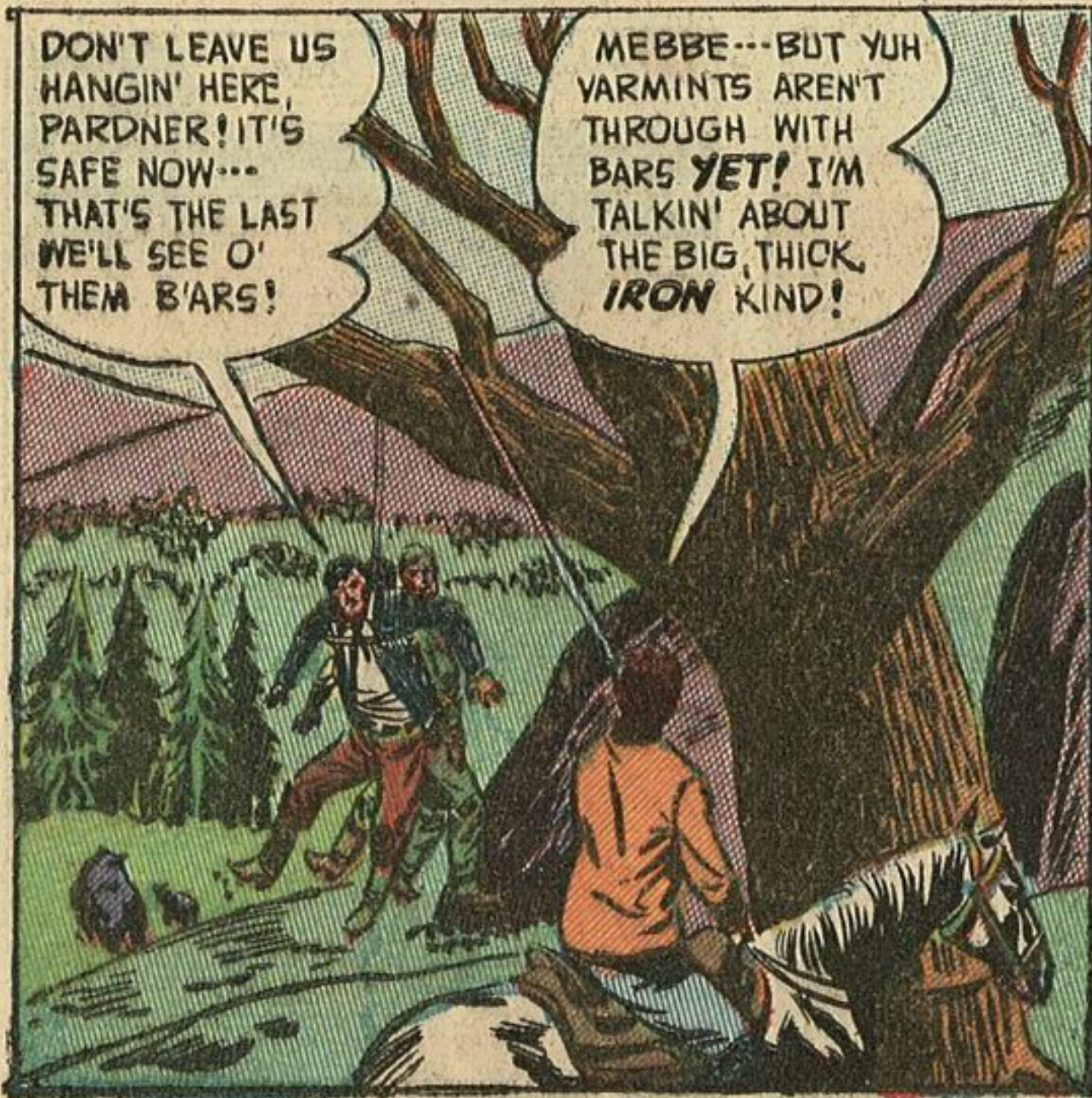


GIT READY TUH MOVE,
BRONC---OR IT'LL TAKE
THE SHERIFF A WEEK TUH
COLLECT WHAT'S LEFT
O' MUSTANG AN'
HIS PARDS!



IN THE NEXT SECOND---

UGH!



DON'T LEAVE US
HANGIN' HERE,
PARDNER! IT'S
SAFE NOW---
THAT'S THE LAST
WE'LL SEE O'
THEM B'ARS!

MEBBE---BUT YUH
VARMINTS AREN'T
THROUGH WITH
BARS **YET!** I'M
TALKIN' ABOUT
THE BIG, THICK,
IRON KIND!



LATER---

THREE OUTLAWS CORRALED
---AN' TWO DIFF'RENT BANK
HAULS BACK WHAR THEY
BELONG! HOW'S **THAT**
PER A DAY'S WORK,
MIKE?

NOT BAD, LOBO---NOT
BAD! BUT WHEN I WAS
YORE AGE---I COULD'VE
BROUGHT BACK THE
GRIZZLY, TOO!

**THE BANTAM BUCKAROO TAKES
THE MEASURE OF A NEW MENACE
---IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!**

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